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GUY DAVENPORT:

Robot—a story

RICHARD PEVEAR:

Sinyavsky in Two Worlds

FREDERICK MORGAN:

From A Book of Change

JONATHAN CHAVES:

Translations from Yang Wan-li

MARCIA B. SIEGEL:

The Candid Art of Time

Poems by KEVIN KLEIN.

Letter from England by BERNARD BERGONZI.

Articles and Reviews by RICHMOND LATTIMORE,
B. H. HAGGIN, MARVIN MUDRICK, VERNON YOUNG,
PATRICK CRUTTWELL, PATRICIA MEYER SPACKS.

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CONTENTS

Poems from <i>A Book of Change</i>	FREDERICK MORGAN	361
Sinyavsky in Two Worlds	RICHARD PEVEAR	375
Translations from Yang Wan-li	JONATHAN CHAVES	403
Robot (<i>story</i>)	GUY DAVENPORT	413
Four Poems	KEVIN KLEIN	447
Music and Ballet Chronicle	B. H. HAGGIN	451
The Candid Art of Time	MARCIA B. SIEGEL	461

Reviews

"Private Faces in Public Places"	PATRICK CRUTTWELL	469
Poetry Chronicle	RICHMOND LATTIMORE	475
Can You Forgive Him?	MARVIN MUDRICK	487
Fiction Chronicle	PATRICIA MEYER SPACKS	497
The Emperor's New Prose	VERNON YOUNG	513

Report

Letter from England	BERNARD BERGONZI	521
<i>Letter to the Editor</i>	HAYDEN CARRUTH	468
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>		358



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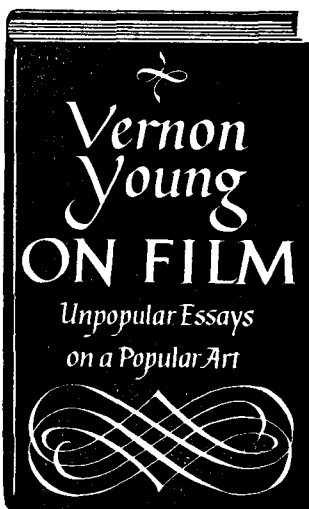
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MARCIA B. SIEGEL's first book, *At the Vanishing Point*, is being published this fall by Saturday Review Press. The book is a collection of dance reviews and articles that originally appeared in several newspapers and magazines, including THE HUDSON REVIEW.

RICHMOND LATTIMORE's collected volume of poetry, *Poems from Three Decades*, has just been published by Scribner's.

PATRICIA MEYER SPACKS is Professor of English at Wellesley College. Her latest book is *An Argument of Images* (Harvard University Press).

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FREDERICK MORGAN

From *A Book of Change*

I

Thinking of the past, and of cross-roads
where a man meets, or does not meet, his time,
I wonder at my own old reckonings
and how a guidance came to stir in me—
grew like a plant nudging up green shoots
and thrusting nubby branchlets to the sun—
uncomfortable to the heart's strong customs
that moved the earlier life. On all roads now
the time draws near in the form of a man in green,
a man from the past whose body holds the future
in its live currents, being invisible
to those whose hearts have not suffered the growth—
but seen at last, a man to be embraced,
for he is you who read and I who write.

II

Changeless themselves, the golden persons lurk
in the past, the fictive world, the fourth dimension,
not obviously there—but available
to the freshened heart that focusses its sight.
Each is a seed, a kernel of bright gold
that can be cracked and opened if you know how:
enormous dark within, and a thousand winds
raging to bring those blessings deeply feared
of choice and chance and joy and illumination.
Mark them, my soul—the general in his tent
ordering the line of battle for the morrow;
the lovers in the groves by Mytilene;
the prince who left his throne and searched for God:
not what they tell, but what is told in them.

III

The serpent of the shadows crept
into my thoughts in '27.
The butler from the house next door
showed me his penis, long and red.

I read of whales and dinosaurs
in the Book of Knowledge, rainy days,
and woke up screaming one hot night
fearing hell and my evil nurse.

Dad commuted from New York,
played golf, kept up with the Stock Exchange.
Mother waited on the grandparents.
The boy was left pretty much alone

and the nation drove to a kind of end.
Everywhere, though, new seeds are sown:
strange, this link of the what-I-was
to mortal breaths I'm breathing now!

God slays himself with each new year
but the purusha dwells unseasoned.
Friends, your every heaven and hell
are threaded with autumnal rains.

—We killed the snake with a garden shovel,
innocent beast of darting tongue.
The days moved on. We moved with them.
I stand here now and write this poem.

IV

Boy and spirit traveled in a clock
over the frosted town on Christmas eve:
the speaking animals were bundled warm
in earthy burrows under drifted snow.

His house left far behind, the objects in it
took on, in distance, strange lives of their own
not threatening, but firm: they were his equal.
He felt more kin to the rabbit and the deer.

The spirit laughed and beckoned to the future:
bright colors, sugared scents, tastes in profusion
suddenly spread out a patchwork landscape.
Everywhere, though, a tiny malice lurked

as if to warn him only (not defeat him);
it's not so hard to tell the good from the bad—
but to tell good from good, now that's the trick!
When he returned—in safety?—it was Christmas.

V

THE SMILE

To Paula

"She walks in beauty," Byron wrote:
a beauty, though, somewhat unreal—
it's what he thought he should have felt,
perhaps, and not what he did feel.

Doubtless, he loved. And doubtless, too,
a poem may exaggerate;
but this small one I'm writing you,
Paula my love, will tell it straight.

I sat here in my chair, eyes closed,
waiting for a poem to come;
half-sleeping, from my depths I heard
your movements in the other room.

Opened my eyes a crack, and saw
you fixing flowers in our green vase:
African daisies fresh from Holland,
purple and red anemones.

Your hands were deft. Your face, intent
above that work you do so well,
took on a gentle, abstract smile.
That smile is more than poems can tell,

is the true beauty, grace of one
at home with her desires and powers.
I treasure it, and always shall,
that smile of yours above the flowers.

VI

Cold night in Princeton, 1942.
Dark sky with cloud-shapes, here and there a star,
the air freezing. I wore no overcoat
and whistling to myself "Blues in the Night"
passed through the dark quadrangles edged with snow.

My mind surged forward through the cloudy years—
what would they bring me? First of all, a war,
obscurity of shifting hopes and fears.
But looked beyond, and saw some kind of end
where things would be once more what I had known.

Never to be. The past remains the past,
retains the magic of what's left behind
and makes illusion of its afterglow;
the present moves into the unforeseen,
creates its living magic as it goes.

A war, a wife and children, then a life—
a sense, not false, of doing what I ought
and what I wanted: it was quite sincere
but just a bit rebellious, as though forced—
life sprang its trap, I wasn't where I thought.

A quarter of a century to learn
through pain, and loss, and gain, to find myself
in joy that links me to the one I was.
Sharer of my joy, we heard that tune last night:
here, where I am, I offer you this poem.

VII

Sometimes I hear my father's voice, sometimes my son's, in mine:
the modulations of two who have died—
passing beyond these tides of being. Gone,

but still their forms appear as though in sudden shafts of sun:
Dad in the corner chair at "39"
smoking his pipe; John standing at my desk

smiling, talking to me of school, or work, or politics.
Both of them are real to me today,
more real than half the people whom I meet,

as if their being, somehow, is in very loss confirmed.
Reality may be a being in mind
and who knows at what point the mind has end?

The world that is not here may be a world of sun and trees,
a world of man's potentialities:
our absences may there be presences.

Perhaps, in the long run, all mind, all memory is shared
just as the body's basic stuff is shared
that crumbles and renews, as time moves on

(illusive time—whose motion may be but a long day's dream!)
in other bodies, other being. Yes,
likely we are one substance, of which mind,

matter, are forms. Voices of past and future speak in ours
and somewhere, all is known—as I know now
father's and son's reality in me.

VIII

The ten thousand things are getting out of hand,
may be headed for the ultimate smashup?

Let them go, let them be,
seeming is not the same as being.

There is a responsibility to the contingent.
Accept it, but remain true to the center,

for the central point is greater than any sphere,
and the Way is there, as it has always been.

Do these two things: you are a sage.
Only begin to do them: you are freed from hysteria,

from the diseased commotion of the age—
free to act cleanly, without regret or apprehension.

Above all, do not use man to help out heaven
or your mind, to help out what you cannot know.

Be yourself, as an old misshapen tree
is itself whether living or dead or beyond life and death.

Then you may move among the myriads
invulnerable, and play your part as well.

IX

ILLUMINATIONS

I.

The princess from her couch at dawn
sings to the sun
that he may fill her with his joy
of battles won,

of a perfection that foretells
the pyramids
and wisdom that may bid the Sphinx
close his worn lids,

for there is nothing that she knows
or may not know
but the *within*, which from the god's
darkness must grow

as she moves on in quietude
down branching days,
his gold still coursing through her blood's
unspoken ways,

until in the deep stone at last
her visions cease
to be but hers—and make return
to their first peace.

2.

At noon, the furry girls stretch out and talk about fucking
and pat themselves and laugh and touch their fuzzy places.
A wind from the Aegean brings brine against the olives.
Somewhere is an eye: in the thyme, maybe, or jasmine.

From the leaves a memory glints: of keen Odysseus,
the wanderer who is to come in crafty rectitude—
full of thought, enduring—one who knows his destiny
and in despite of gods makes it his destination.

Can the beast-girls recall the weathered skin of the hero,
or is it some vague foretaste that distends their furry lips,
or yet—in the pure caldron—do they see time's ways all one:
outer and inner being of the great god-and-goddess?

For what are rest and action? Gods in the leaf and blossom,
 gods in the sea-spray and storm, oppose us and uphold us,
 and all of us weave the web: the spider bids us remember
 ever the wanderer has the gray-eyed one at his side.

Does it come to the same thing, then—all that strong journeying,
 and lassitude of passive bodies in the hot noon sun?
 If Odysseus remains, the god is in the fucking;
 if he leaves, it is the god within who moves him on.

3.

The Arabian came to me “gowned in white.”
 Outside the city walls we lay all night.
 Dry season—and mid-Asiatic hush:
 my pearls glowed damply in the blackish bush

and melons hung full to my tasting lips.
 I tasted them, and took long gentle sips
 of tarter berries lurking soft below—
 then learned how deeply my own roots could grow.

The moon above us was a coin of gold.
 The tree-tops moved to a design foretold
 by old geometers of Babylon
 who knew which edge of being they were on.

Here—inner, outer, male and female merge—
 and day and night—in the blind stunning urge
 that brings new wisdom at its desperate term.
 I lay back on the earth weak as a worm,

stricken with the dark gift of deeper being,
 then—looking up—with that dark double seeing
 beheld the huge clouds coursing through the sky:
 gods, goddesses; bearers of destiny.

X

Good days, bad days alternate;
tragedies and joys.
Take them not too seriously
nor let them break your poise.

What *you* are dies, dies each day,
drawn back into the stream;
what you *are* survives, deep under day,
flowing with the stream.

Angry, fearful, pained—pull back
your senses from their riot,
close ears and eyes, correct yourself
in darkness and in quiet.

XII

If it rains,
 it's all right!
If I die today,
 all right—
Things go on,
 sun and rain,
etcetera.
 I'm a part of them.

XII

Swift horse of the moon,
watch over this house,
this house on the water,
this home under stars—

Proud prow of night,
look up at the stars!
There you course
when the moon is bright,

dark wind in your mane,
space a-hum in your ears—
you draw the goddess
through oncoming years

yourself elemental
wind-animal-god,
dweller at the crossing
of the mind's three roads—

watch over this house,
let no evil approach,
and only such pain
as the moon bears away.

XIII

Sir Hummingbird dips his long spear
into the golden honeycups
and out again, then whirs away
across the garden at mid-day.
Soon he returns; and darts and stops,
tasting his favorites once more.

The while our honeysuckle vine
remains in bloom, he'll keep this up.
He starts at dawn. We lie adrowse
in our big bed and hear him come,
blending his low and vibrant hum
with the soft droning of the bees.

Until, one day, he'll disappear
and stay away until next year.
I have no notion where he goes.
And some day, too, he'll die, and drop
small and stiff to the earth, and rot.
Meanwhile, what beauty is like his?

XIV

The other morning I awoke from a dream with the sound in my ears of tires coming to rest in soft gravel. I had been carried gently forward, in a slumber; I sensed sunlight and warmth just outside; as the motion stopped a voice spoke to me: "Here we are, Mr. Frederick."

I awoke, at peace, in the present. But the images were from forty years ago, from a Connecticut summer of my boyhood. We had been out for a ride, or were returning from the beach; I had fallen asleep in the back seat; and now the car had pulled up before our front door, and all was quiet in the late afternoon sunlight as the chauffeur—or perhaps it was my governess—announced our return. I would step from the car and see the wide green lawn (on which the sprinkler would be revolving), the flower-beds, the tall and handsome trees. I would pause a moment, to see where the sun hung low over distant woods, and then pass through the familiar doorway into the white, dimly lit house, where downstairs my grandmother would be taking her tea, and upstairs my much-loved room awaited me.

The voice in the dream may have been a servant's, but it was in no way humble. Rather, it was the voice of one who knew me well, who had been with us a long time. Friendly, independent, from a world of its own; but acknowledging me, the child, as heir of mine.

Strange, the solidity and rightness of this dream. As though in all travels, through many lives and many selves, one is never very far from the destination—which, indeed, one may come to, even after the greatest apparent dislocations, quietly as at the end of a summer day. The child within is never far away. And within

the child's self is another, more profound, more immediate life.

Let me live to be a hundred—the end will not be very different. The strange, enduring, friendly, impersonal voice. “Here we are, Mr. Frederick.” Where? At the house we have always known, where the First Persons dwell.

XV

“Vanishing backward
 from your own skull
 see it go,
 that I you thought was ‘I.’”

*

Stands of caribou
 in Alaska:
 brown eyes look upward
 at the dawn of death—
 all are contained in
 the “I” of Alaska,
 the “I” of caribou,
 the “I” of death.

*

What god lives in the breaking wave?
 What is the “moment” of a mind?
 Where is a birth from? And why?
 You see, do you not, the hinge?

*

Before her hidden cave
 that overlooks blue waters
 the Vola remembers
 days that will come

for gods slay each other
 but mind foresees
 eternal rebirth
 of what "now" is.

*

"Are you withdrawn now
 back into my Presence?
 Has it gone,
 that 'I' you thought was I?"

XVI

Letting go into God is almost physical;
 is physical, really, if you put your mind to it,
 like letting your body slide into a quarry pool
 deep in the woods. It's summertime—hot sun, green trees—
 but the water is dark and chill, and there is no one watching.
 You slip from the edge—a shock of cold—and then you're free!
 Indeed, if you died that instant, free for ever
 because you've given your self.

That's what each living moment

is, in a life, if you come down to it.
 But we forget, because we're caught up in the network
 of hopes, desires, fears,—and because we try
 to live in an illusion of permanence.
 God tells us to be mindful of the physical:
 the self is cunning, and will play its pleasant games
 as long as we allow. But the heart stops at last.
 The truth is in the shock and the surrender.

XVII

The devastation
 of being
 brings being
 more newly—

the harp
of creation
may reverberate
more truly

when the great
final wind
blows strong
through its branches

and the soul
pale and brave
to its first home
advances.

XVIII

Death, from where we stand, is non-existence;
but from another standpoint *here* is unreal,
the wrong side of the tapestry—where work is done
that only shows its form on the other side.

Dreams give a sense of this. There is a meaning
that holds us while we're there as part of itself,
but which we lose on the way back. We wake,
feeling deprived of a larger understanding.

Imagine yourself in a huge dark mansion
at night: you're not quite lost, not quite at home,
and free, or so it seems, to move about.
Rooms, halls and stairways, all are still and dark

and yet you know that in that very house
a party is planned and guests are gathering—
talking, laughing, filling the bright-lit rooms—
but you can't find them.—That's the situation.

RICHARD PEVEAR

Sinyavsky in Two Worlds

Two Brothers Named Chénier

There were two brothers named Chénier. The despicable younger brother belongs entirely to literature; the elder, who was executed, executed literature himself.

—Osip Mandelstam, "Fourth Prose"

WHEN EZRA POUND WAS ASKED, in a recent interview, what he thought of the American literary scene today, he is supposed to have replied: "I can't be blamed for all this damned disorder." I want to write about Andrei Sinyavsky, but when I think about him, I keep running into Yevtushenko. And I find that in order to make Sinyavsky stand clear, I will have to distinguish him as fully as possible from the younger poet. What is more, the distinction that I must try to draw is one that is not very clear in this country. It is strange to realize that Yevtushenko is a major figure in American poetry. I know of no American poet whose work has appeared in large format, with photographs, on the editorial page of *The New York Times*. And Yevtushenko's most recent American collection, *Stolen Apples*, was translated by some of our most distinguished writers. Of course, Russian poets are welcome to publish their work in the West. But we might say, Russian poets above all are welcome to publish their work in the West. There is a disturbing confusion of poetic merit and publicity in the appearance of their books. It was because of the same peculiar condition that Andrei Sinyavsky was published here. But the essential difference—that while Yevtushenko continues to make world tours, reading to record-breaking audiences, Sinyavsky continues to serve out his sentence in a corrective labor colony—seems to go unnoticed.

Yevtushenko made his name as the spokesman for a new generation in the Soviet Union, a generation that was no longer going to take what the Russian people took from Stalin. He was "precocious" and "fiery" and stood for the claim that things were

improving. He still makes that claim, and perhaps he is right. But when Sinyavsky published some of his writings abroad, he was arrested, subjected to an absurd trial, and sentenced to hard labor. What is the difference between them? There is the difference that while Yevtushenko was outspoken with permission, Sinyavsky, whose writings are less political, acted without permission in sending his work abroad. But there is a more fundamental difference. Yevtushenko's work, whether it praises or criticizes conditions in his country, remains within the bounds of the public-political word market. Sinyavsky's work grows out of the inner call of language. It is the difference between two types of artist; the one is becoming more and more common; the other, which is always rare, seems to be getting rarer.

In Russia, this distinction is fairly clear: there are the official writers, who do their work as state representatives of the "sector of the arts"; and there are the more or less underground writers, who work out of inner necessity. Only an authentic artist would continue to work under the conditions in which Mandelstam, Pasternak, Akhmatova, Solzhenitsyn, and Sinyavsky (among others) have worked. But in America, this distinction is not clear. Do we have official writers? And what is their party line? What kind of coercion is exerted upon them? We are not accustomed to asking these questions. Official writers are an elite class in the Soviet Union and have economic and social privileges that are not available to the average citizen. Similar incentives exist for artists in this country; they do not require open political conformity, but they do impose restrictions and permissions upon subject matter, style, thought, and language; and they are equally far from the sources of authentic vision. If an official policy on the arts were handed down, no doubt the majority of our writers would accept it. But a clear choice has not been forced upon them.

The books of Yevtushenko and of Voznesensky, in translation, look like state department efforts at cultural exchange. Since state departments are responsible for cultural barriers, their attempts at exchange are always somewhat dubious. And the public readings of these works are touched by the same confusion. In 1936, addressing a plenary session of the Writers' Union, Pasternak

answered the charge that he was "unsoviet" because he did not travel and read his poetry, by saying:

... what if I had once been enthralled . . . by the way Pushkin and Tyutchev used to travel and still travel through their books? . . . Comrades, a long, long time ago, in about the year 1922, I was already ashamed by the easily available platform victories. It was enough to mount the tribune then to evoke applause. I felt that I was facing the possibility of the birth of a secondary life, revolting in its cheap, false and artificial glitter.

But our semi-official writers seem to be bemused by the half-world of public events, by a kind of importance which after all does seem important because it makes front page news. And so they sit on the platform, like parents at a school play, facing an audience of thousands who do not read *their* work.

Heidegger has written, "The light of the public darkens everything." Yevtushenko is a public poet. But the American poets who take part in these readings are making what is for them a rare appearance before the world. Although Pasternak wrote that it is "unbecoming to be famous" and that the poet's task is to stay "alive, only alive, only alive to the end," it is understandable that poets are tempted by public recognition. It seems that there is no other community than the public, unless the universities are used as a substitute. But what is remarkable is that states of mind should be so alike in nations that are thought to be ideologically opposed.

In order to develop this assertion, I will quote from Sinyavsky's essay on Yevtushenko, "In Defense of the Pyramid." In the preface to his long poem, *Bratsk Hydroelectric Station*, Yevtushenko says: "Perhaps this is not a poem, but simply my thoughts united by the dispute between the two themes." Sinyavsky comments: "We shall not quibble. After thirty and then even forty digressions in *The Triangular Pear* by Andrei Voznesensky, we have become used to the freest compositions and shall not look for the indispensable harmony of subject matter or for purity of genre." And instead of evaluating Yevtushenko's poem in aesthetic terms, Sinyavsky proposes to "touch on some general problems that his work poses for modern poetry."

"Yevtushenko owes his popularity first of all to himself—to the

very vivid and fundamental qualities of his character and poetic talent, which permit him, for better or worse, to rule over the minds of his time within a certain circle, and to a limited degree to fill the gap left in poetry by the departure of Mayakovsky. . . .” What Yevtushenko has adopted from his great predecessors—Blok, Tsvetaeva, Mayakovsky, and Yesenin—is the style of “lyrical biography” in which “the poet becomes a literary subject, a fascinating novel in verse with a vividly portrayed hero—the poet—in the center as the chief figure.” The form, as Sinyavsky defines it, implies “the gesture of invitation to the spectacle, festive and tragic . . . ; an extreme candor in telling about oneself; the striving to put oneself so fully into the verse that we almost perceive the hero physically, admire him, suffer for him, and involuntarily see him as identical with the author’s own personality. . . .” But Sinyavsky goes on to say that Yevtushenko, “for all his proneness to self-display, lacks the stamp of an exclusive personality, the idea of a vocation or of a great and terrible fate which would impart to the poet’s destiny something providential and not to be resisted . . . ;” that “Yevtushenko’s hero seems like an ordinary man. His attractive features and high ideals do not prevent him from being ‘like everyone else. . . .’”

“All of this when compared with his more demanding and self-confident predecessors . . . must be described as a change, if not a diminution, of the tradition. We believe unconditionally the confused and frenzied utterances of Yesenin:

So that for all my grievous sins,
My lack of faith in grace,
They should put me in a Russian shirt
To die under the icons.

Because all this has been deeply felt and seems to have real strength, it has a majestic ring. And here is the point where one feels in Yevtushenko an affectation and a groundless pretense. . . .” The outsize character of lyrical biography, “if not supported from within by a personality of the same charge and caliber, sounds . . . rather bare and rarefied and declamatory, and it easily passes into a mere publicist’s work. . . .” And he concludes:

It is hard to reproach Yevtushenko for the changes which have occurred, and yet one cannot fail to notice with chagrin that his war-

like temperament, boldness, and implacability toward "the scum" coexist in a startling way with compliance and adroitness, and all his complicated distribution of troops and their regrouping now on the right, now on the left flank, in short all his "battle strategy" turns out to be a very simple adjustment to the situation.

In fact, Yevtushenko himself is critical of his own half-heartedness in the more confessional and intimate side of his work. Early in his career he wondered: "Shall I not really turn out to be anything, not really result?" Sinyavsky pursues the question: "... he still continues to worry about this theme, as though all his books were only a test of his pen, preparation, a running start, and a tuning up. This gives his work the stamp of haste, instability, and diffuseness. He writes a lot, eagerly and often carelessly, without depth, as if he were chasing somebody he wished to overtake—most likely himself, who still has not resulted."

This protracted self-evaluation, the admission of weakness, hesitation, anxiety in the face of the future, as Sinyavsky remarks, is what makes Yevtushenko so appealing to young audiences. "Youth too stands half-way on the road to itself, is also in a hurry to live and does not know what will result; it is full of doubt, makes choices, reappraises, seeks, finds, and does not find itself. With Yevtushenko this process has been rather extended. . . ." He has lived a life

accompanied alternately by applause and reprimands, and combining rare "good luck" and success with official half-recognition—and this has formed the habit in the poet of striving for something and of justifying himself in some respect or other. . . . Perhaps that is why his sincere "anxiety about himself" . . . at times suddenly smacks of vanity and the desire to "seem" overpowers the urge to "be"; the concern for "What am I like?" is interrupted by anxiety about "How do I look?"; the problem of the poet's fate is reduced to the trivial success of winning. . . . The formation of a personality and the establishment of a character [are] suddenly shifted to an entirely different plane: the author's advancement in the literary arena. In the question "Am I succeeding, or not?" one begins to hear the gambler's tone: "Will it work or won't it? Am I lucky or am I not?"

I have quoted at length from Sinyavsky's essay because it is necessary to see the overall coherence of his analysis, and because this description of a Russian poet's situation touches point by

point the situation of many American writers. What emerges from Sinyavsky's criticism of Yevtushenko is the embodiment of a general condition.

Like Yevtushenko, the second generation of modern writers in America (born between 1910 and 1930, roughly speaking) has had to live in the shade of the great living or recently dead. The older writers who created the modern movement, lived by and for their work; in their day writers were not teachers and there were no writing schools. The second generation has created and staffed the writing programs of our universities. Was there a sudden change in economic conditions that forced writers into the universities? Has modern literature taken refuge there from a hostile world? Or has it been driven there? In any case, we feel precisely what Sinyavsky notes in Yevtushenko: a diminution of the tradition; a self-consciousness that keeps these writers from believing in their own forms and words. The magazines which were once the battleground of the modern movement, and which each had a character of its own, a content, an inner thrust, have for the most part either disappeared or been absorbed into the universities, where they exist as "outlets" for the enormous "production" that is turned out by the writing schools. The mentality behind this production lacks energy, vision, a design upon the world; it sees writing as a kind of self-contained performance, a sport, or as Sinyavsky has said, a form of gambling. Against the downdrag of this movement, Edward Dahlberg has set two luminous sentences: "Writing is conscience, scruple, and the farming of our ancestors. . . . Those who write for lucre or fame are grosser Iscariots than the cartel robbers, for they steal the genius of the people, which is its will to resist evil." But what has caused this diminution, and how has it come about?

I will say that it is the result of the secularization of life, which is now very far advanced and is assuming totalitarian forms. The further the world moves towards secularization, the more the poet feels that he is rootless, out of place, that the making of poetry is, as Antonio Machado once put it, a subaltern activity. The universities may seem like the proper refuge for literature. But in fact, the institutionalizing of literature is a way of isolating and containing it. Bureaucracy is the institutional form of secularization, and the universities have drawn into their ex-

pandering bureaucratic structure all of the activities of the free spirit which used to exist at large in the world. Poetry is assigned a place among those "experiences" that are good for children. But the most puzzling thing is that the isolation of poetry has been carried out without open force or conspiracy, as if in obedience to an invisible but persuasive will.

Heidegger was speaking of the secularized world when he said, "The light of the public darkens everything." He uses a visual metaphor, and quite rightly. The mind argues; the spirit sees. Tyrants have always understood the usefulness of argument, and that the best way to control an intellectual is to slip him a new theory. A man who argues becomes obsessed with the coherence of his argument; he no longer looks at the world. Argument is the instrument of secularization; and the image, the icon, the metaphor are the language of the sacred. Propaganda is a form of argument; the main rule of propaganda is that it must not make a picture; propaganda is a blinded language.

The secularized world creates its own forms of expression, as the sacred world did before it. But it would be a mistake to see these as simply two possible choices. The secularized forms of expression are based on the forgetting of their origins; the sacred forms are based on the remembrance of their origins. Walter Benjamin, the great German critic, saw deeply into the process of secularization and the development of secular forms; he often writes that experience has lost its "aura." The secular forms of expression are a diminution of sacred forms, which means a reduction of the world. Public poetry and writing as a form of gambling or competition are secularized forms of literary creation. Of course, Pindar was a public poet. But he lived in a sacred time, when even athletic competition was not unmindful of its place in the cosmos.

Totalitarianism, as an advanced stage of secularization, appropriates many of the old sacred forms; but it uses them mechanically, it imposes them, whereas true forms are always newly created out of ancient sources. This is as true of fascist totalitarianism as it is of the communist varieties. But why should a self-styled free and democratic nation like the United States reveal the same symptoms? What force of secularization is exerted upon the American people? It is, I would say, a total economic in-

doctrination, which is so thoroughly familiar to us, so much a part of the air we breathe, and so effectively separated from the average man's political education, that we accept it simply as the law of life. The only goal or purpose that is ever mentioned on the political platform (aside from negative goals) is "prosperity." It is a thoroughly secular ideal. In fact, prosperity is the only ideal the secular world can put forward. And it is not an ideal in any meaningful sense: it is an ambition, a gamble. The "ideal" of prosperity, which is theoretically open to all, conceals an utterly ruthless and blind exploitation, a usury, of the earth and of human lives. The consumer society (which reaches its ultimate development, as the French situationists have said, when a man who labors all day on an assembly line making television sets, comes home at night and watches television) is accepted as an inevitability. But the truth is that this idea is forcefully imposed upon the American people and exerts the same kind of secularizing power as does any other form of totalitarianism. Berdyaev has pointed out that those who consider socialism "utopian" forget that the system of free enterprise makes even greater demands on human character. But in fact the engineers of the consumer society appeal by design not to human strengths but to human weaknesses: to acquisitiveness, to the fear of material insecurity, to conformism, to greed, to covetousness. Their assumption is that man will inevitably fall. And it follows that a government which makes the consumer society its ideal, and which develops the weaknesses of its people, is corrupt. This may not be the unavoidable consequence of free enterprise. There is no reason why free enterprise should not work as an economic arrangement. It is the men who avail themselves of it who are corrupt. Its failure is not ordained by historical laws, it is a moral failure, and only inevitable in so far as mankind can be counted on to make the wrong choice.

The fall of man is a sacred metaphor, which gives rich poetic significance to the figure of Adam. Mayakovsky was a kind of Adam in the post-revolutionary world, and his lyrical biography has a sacred aura about it. Mayakovsky ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But Yevtushenko's poems are truly "stolen apples." The dubious origin and poetic mediocrity of his work, however, matter very little to his American publishers. Publish-

ing began with the hand copying of sacred books. But the American publishing business is a secularized institution: it fosters meaninglessness, the market-value of words. American publishers look not for the best poetry but for the best-selling poet, and Yevtushenko's poetry happens to sell, albeit for reasons that have nothing to do with the making or reading of poetry. The public buys his work without being able to say quite why they buy it. In Russia, too, the public buys Yevtushenko. But once again, in Russia the distinction is clearer. The Russians have a second way of circulating literature, called *samizdat*: the passing of manuscripts from hand to hand. In this way, poetry is brought back to the life it led before the invention of printing. Pasternak's writings, the poetry of Mandelstam and Tsvetaeva, the fiction of Solzhenitsyn and Sinyavsky have all circulated in *samizdat*. But America has no *samizdat*, and our writers are all at the mercy of the publishing business. Poetry cannot be killed off even by the worst conditions, because it answers to an elementary human need, but our best poets show the marks of their struggle to maintain themselves between the sacred origins of their art and the secularizing force of the public word-market. The life stories of artists born in this century show the price that has been paid and how few have been able to avoid the deep sense of betrayal that comes when sacred forms are appropriated by the secularized world. Alain has written, in *Les Dieux*: "It is the severe rule of the spirit that the spirit pays nothing, and that no man can serve two masters." And Jung had carved over the doorway of his house: *Vocatus atque non vocatus deus aderit*: Summoned and not summoned God will be there.

The existence of *samizdat* is a refutation of the cultural determinism which rules much of our thinking, which says that the development of new forms is inevitable and irreversible. For a long time now we have been judging works of art in terms of how well they *reflect* the age, and we have justified the breakdown of forms by the "laws" of aesthetic evolution. But creation is a primary act, and is determined not by evolutionary laws but by the freedom of the spirit.

The mind argues; the spirit sees. The language of the sacred is the language of image, metaphor, symbol, the language of poetry. It is no accident that the most profound and world-

building thought of our time is rooted in the language of poetry. It is no accident that every religion begins in images and ends in theology. Only the language of images is capable of expressing the simultaneous dimensions of the living world. Dostoevsky and the symbolists believed that the Russians were a God-bearing people. One of Andrei Sinyavsky's greatest accomplishments has been to show us that the poet, the word-bringer of the sacred world, is not an inaccessible high priest, but our human brother.

The Third World

In February, 1966, the Moscow Province Court found Andrei Sinyavsky guilty of blasphemy and sentenced him to the maximum penalty of seven years at hard labor in a corrective labor colony. The trial of Sinyavsky and Daniel caused some stir in the West and strong protests in Russia, but once it was over everything quieted down, the two men went off to serve their sentences, and the darkness that falls on what is no longer news closed over them. When a collection of Sinyavsky's essays was published here in 1970, the book was hardly noticed. Why reopen the case? Because it is important to make some sense of the fact that Sinyavsky was convicted largely on the basis of Western reviews of his work. The general estimate in the West seems to be that Sinyavsky was of interest mainly as an underground critic of Soviet society, not as a writer of fiction—a judgment that his prosecutors shared—whereas he is, I think, the most important writer of his generation. The case must be reopened because Sinyavsky's work is still waiting for us, in *our* future.

Western publishers marketed the writings of "Abram Tertz" as daring criticisms of the Soviet regime; there is an automatic interest in all manuscripts that are brought out of Russia; the West has a craving for such material that is worth examining. The public should ask itself why it is so anxious for evidence that the Soviet "experiment" is not working out; and it should ask itself what a writer like Sinyavsky might have in mind when he allows his work to be published in the West. But these are both very complex questions. The conditioned response is what sells books. This is nothing new; it is an emotional trap that

publishers ought to do everything possible to avoid. Instead they do their best to play into it.

The public image of Sinyavsky that has been fostered in this country is summarized in the blurb that appears on the cover of the recent edition of his essays. It was taken from the translators' introduction and purports to be a statement of Sinyavsky's position:

Underneath all the specific comments one can hear, now distinctively, now by suggestion, the call for freedom—freedom for the imagination and for liberation from the bonds of Socialist realism. Fetters of any kind lead to falseness. This is, in summary, the great single message of his essays. Man must be free to create.

It is a characteristically abstract passage, which touches on some important questions but never really asks them (this problem is not remedied elsewhere in the introduction). Instead it assumes that the answers are already given, that "freedom" and "imagination" and "creation" are eternal constants which, for political reasons, the Soviet government chooses to deny to the Russian people. Such generalizations, left empty of real meaning, quickly attract political determinations. The implication in everything I want to say is that Sinyavsky's position as a writer in the Soviet Union is more ambiguous and less to be defined in political terms than such statements would lead us to believe. Placing Sinyavsky's work in the context of the ideological polemic that has gone on between Russia and the West since 1917 is like squaring the circle. Political conditions may explain the circumstances of his publication in the West and in Russia, but political analysis will not reach the content of his work or the meaning of his life.

The assertion that "fetters of any kind lead to falseness" is too broad to mean very much. When it is applied to the work of an artist, it runs into some interesting difficulties. But it is also specifically contradicted in Sinyavsky's most radical piece of criticism, the essay "On Socialist Realism" that was published in 1959 under the name of Abram Tertz. Sinyavsky says:

Art is not afraid of dictatorship, severity, repressions, or even conservatism and clichés. When necessary, art can be narrowly religious, dumbly governmental, devoid of individuality—and yet good. We go into aesthetic raptures over the stereotypes of Egyptian art,

Russian ikons and folklore. Art is elastic enough to fit into any bed of Procrustes that history presents to it.

His criticism of socialist realism, he goes on to say, is not that it is "fettered" by such severities but that it is eclectic, built upon an aesthetic contradiction: it wants to be religious, ruled by a single great Purpose, and at the same time realistic in the tradition of the nineteenth-century masters. Sinyavsky does not speak against state interference in art, he speaks against the particular result of the state's interference in this case—a "half-classicist half-art, which is none too socialist and not at all realist." It is eclecticism that leads to falseness. (In an interview with Olga Carlisle, Yevtushenko affirmed eclecticism as the basis of his art: "I always try to take anything that interests me from anyone. . . ." See *Poets on Street Corners*, New York, 1968.)

But Sinyavsky's position is still more ambiguous than this passage suggests, because he is well aware that the aesthetic contradiction of socialist realism rests on a deeper contradiction which underlies the whole of Soviet life. He describes the origin and nature of socialist realism in relation to the history of the Soviet period in a way that makes this contradiction clear:

So that prisons should vanish forever, we built new prisons. So that all frontiers should fall, we surrounded ourselves with a Chinese wall. So that work should become a rest and a pleasure, we introduced forced labor. So that not one drop of blood be shed any more, we killed and killed and killed.

This famous passage is one of the ones that led to his conviction. It is important to realize, as his judges did not, that Sinyavsky attempts to tell the truth about Soviet history in this essay, and to tell the truth in Russia, for the sake of Russia. This is not a statement of disaffection; it is too passionate for that, and, as Czeslaw Milosz has pointed out, he speaks in the first person. It is a minor circumstance that he was forced to publish the essay abroad.

The same paradox of acceptance and revolt is evident in Sinyavsky's attitude towards the Revolution and the Stalinist period. Testifying about his work before the court (see *On Trial*, ed. and trans. by Max Hayward, rev. ed., New York, 1967) he said:

I talk about our difficulties and contradictions in the last few years under Stalin; I say that brutalities and inhuman methods were used. But the Stalinist period has its legitimate place in history and I don't reject it. I reject the accusations of the Western world about brutalities; they resulted from action against inertia. Western ideas about the renunciation of force have no appeal to me. My reply to liberal critics is: What have all your humane old dodderers achieved?

And in "On Socialist Realism":

The memory of the Revolution is as sacred, both to those who took part in it and to those who were born after it, as the image of a dead mother. It is easier for us to grant that everything that happened after the Revolution was its betrayal than to insult its memory by reproaches and suspicions. Unlike the party, the state, the Ministry of State Security collectivization, Stalin, etc., the Revolution needs no justification by the Communist paradise that awaits us. It is self-justified and justified emotionally, like love or inspiration. And even though the Revolution was carried out in the name of Communism, its name does not sound less sweet to us for that. Maybe even sweeter. . . .

The authorities who condemned Sinyavsky found this complex attitude intolerable. They insisted upon reading it as an attack on the Soviet state and ignored Sinyavsky's attempts to explain his peculiar form of loyalty. In general, the West agreed with his judges.

The contradiction that makes socialist realism eclectic, and that undermines Soviet ideology, is a contradiction brought about by the attempt to assimilate the sacred world into a secularized order of life. The religious cast of Marxism has long been recognized. Berdyaev wrote of it. And the Marxist critic Lucien Goldmann has stated that "modern socialist thought has been able to thrive only within the intellectual and affective world which Christian thought and culture created." Forgetting Goldmann's "within," Soviet ideologists have attempted to replace the Christian world; they have produced parodies of sacred doctrine, they have sanctified their political ends, and they have created in the totalitarian state an inverted egalitarianism in which men are equal only in that they are equally subject to force. Lucien Goldmann's statement was quoted by Mihajlo Mihajlov in an open letter to Yugoslav newspapers (see *Moscow*

Summer, New York, 1965). In the same letter, Mihajlov says: "Believe me, I am not the only one who feels that it was one and the same hand that killed Garcia Lorca and Maxim Gorky. . . . I am deeply convinced that every increase in the strength of Stalinism at the same time signifies and assists the growth of neo-Nazism. . . ."

The idea that "man must be free to create" seems unassailable, but in fact it is riddled with problems. After all, there has been individual freedom—i.e. freedom for certain individuals—to create under some of the worst despotisms in history. Art is always willing to ally itself with the ruling class. But individual liberties in special cases cannot be equated with human liberty. The artist's freedom must be separated from old ideas of privilege. It must also be separated from the trivial freedom that Heidegger describes (in "On the Essence of Truth") as "the random ability to do as we please, to go this way or that in our choice." "What is this freedom of choice?" Sinyavsky asks, in one of his short prose pieces. "Do we really choose whom we love, in what we believe, with what we ail?" Freedom might be better described as the act of rescuing true history from the hands of the ruling class, whoever the present rulers may be.

In "On Socialist Realism" Sinyavsky quotes the following lines from a poem in which Pasternak takes his stand as an artist:

For don't I know that blindfold thrusts
Will not make darkness yield to light?
Am I a monster? Is not the happiness of millions
Closer to me than empty luck for a few?

And with regard to Western humanitarianism, he says:

It is fine to be gentle, to drink tea with preserves, to plant flowers and cultivate love, nonresistance to evil, and other philanthropies. But whom did they save and what did they change in this world, these ancient virgins of both sexes, these egoists of humanism who bought themselves an easy conscience penny by penny and rented themselves a cozy corner in the heavenly almshouses?

We did not want salvation for ourselves, but for all humanity. . . .

They have gone through the initiation of action, and their hands are no longer clean. But although Sinyavsky has no illusions about what has been achieved in Soviet Russia ("Yes, we live in

Communism. It resembles our aspirations about as much as the Middle Ages resembled Christ, modern Western man resembles the free superman, and man resembles God. But all the same, there is *some resemblance* isn't there?"), he does not turn to the West or to Western ideas of individual freedom. He attempts to cut through the dissimulations of propaganda, to touch the real flesh of Russian experience, to reveal its human face. He fights against the secularizing force of a historicism in which history is constantly being revised in the light of doctrine and is therefore constantly being lost—a historicism which strips history of the aura of experience. The experiences and sufferings of the past are sacred to any people, and it is the poet who enables a people to come into possession of its past.

In the West, the word "freedom" still needs to be filled with a more original meaning, because Western ideas of freedom have grown up at the side of free enterprise, which is born of indifference. A Western theater producer once asked Helene Weigel if he would be allowed to use the Berliner Ensemble's production of *Coriolanus*, and Weigel said, "No, you have not worked for it." And Frank O'Hara, in his excellent essay "About Zhivago and His Poems," wrote: ". . . if Pasternak is saying that the 1917 Revolution failed, he must feel that the West never even made an attempt." Pasternak met with the same misunderstanding in the West that Sinyavsky met with later. His novel is not a criticism of the Soviet regime, it is an image of the experience of the Revolution. And just as socialist thought lives within "the intellectual and affective world which Christian thought and culture created," so it is perfectly natural that the poet Pasternak should plant the experience of the Revolution within the larger world of his poetic vision.

Speaking of social ideals, Sinyavsky writes:

The modern mind cannot imagine anything more beautiful and splendid than the Communist ideal. The best it can do is restore to circulation old ideals of Christian love and the liberty of the individual. But it has been unable so far to set up a new Purpose.

Where socialism is concerned, the Western liberal individualist or Russian skeptical intellectual is about in the same position as the cultured and intelligent Roman with regard to victorious Christianity. He called the new faith of the crucified God barbarous and naive, laughed over the lunatics who worshipped the cross—

that Roman guillotine—and believed that the doctrines of the Trinity, the Immaculate Conception, the Resurrection, etc., made no sense whatsoever. But it was quite above his powers to advance any serious arguments against the *ideal* of Christ as such.

We must pay close attention to the tone of this passage. It is certainly ironic, but in a complex and ambiguous way. One thing we can say is that the irony is not in favor of the West, it is not turned against the ideal of human happiness that is promised for the Communist future. But irony hovers around the juxtaposition of the sacred and the secular in Sinyavsky's comparison. The same juxtaposition occurs throughout the essay. A man who accepts Communism, he says, finds that he suddenly possesses a complete vision of life; everything falls into place. He compares this certainty with the skepticism of the nineteenth-century "seekers after God": "I assume that to search means not to have. He who has, who really believes, does not search. And what should he search for, if everything is clear and all he has to do is to *follow* God? God is not found; He finds us and comes upon us. When He has found us, we cease to search and start to act, doing His will." And he compares the attitude of the faithful Communist with the attitude of the Western liberal Christian:

Contemporary Christians, who have broken their spiritual fast and accepted the spirit of individualism, with its free elections, free enterprise, and free press, occasionally abuse the phrase "freedom of choice" which Christ is supposed to have bequeathed us. . . . Even the most liberal God offers only one freedom of choice: to believe or not to believe, to be for Him or for Satan, to go to paradise or hell.

And again, more directly:

When Western writers deplore our lack of freedom of speech, their starting point is their belief in the freedom of the individual. This is the foundation of their culture, but it is organically alien to Communism. A true Soviet writer, a true Marxist, will not accept these reproaches, and will not even know what they are all about. What freedom—if the comparison be permitted—does the religious person require from God? The freedom to praise God still more ardently?

The same two-edged irony occurs in all of these passages. Sinyavsky speaks with the force of real experience when he says "God is not found; He finds us and comes upon us." The force of this exper-

ience goes directly against the eclecticism of Western liberal Christianity. But it is equally incompatible with the secularized religion of Communism. In the sacred atmosphere that Sinyavsky creates with these comparisons, the reduced nature of both worlds is revealed. The real thrust of his irony is against the secular appropriation of the sacred realm, and this is the heart of his criticism. He never states it directly. The sacred cannot speak directly in discursive analysis. It must find a way to appear. The irony in "On Socialist Realism" grows out of the clarity of Sinyavsky's exposition as an inexplicable by-product, a third term that breaks through the dialectical process, the awakening of a deeper voice.

This deeper voice calls us back to the literature of nineteenth-century Russia, to the irony of Dostoevsky's man from underground, who predicted that in the midst of the perfect, rational society of the future "a man of reactionary and ironical countenance" would appear and say, "Why don't we kick the whole thing over, just for the sake of living once more according to our own foolish will!" The nameless man from underground is one of those "superfluous men" whose self-destructive laughter the Russian writers could not silence in themselves. The superfluous man is unable to find a place in the social order and incapable of acting in his own best interest, and yet he suffers from acute self-consciousness and isolation. He is the extreme contrast in Sinyavsky's essay to the "positive hero" of socialist realism:

. . . the superfluous man was a creature of different psychological dimensions, inaccessible to computation and regimentation. He is neither for the Purpose nor against the Purpose—he is outside the Purpose. Now this simply cannot be; it is a fiction, a blasphemy. While the whole world, having defined itself with regard to the Purpose, is divided into two antagonistic camps, he feigns not to understand this and keeps mingling his colors in vague and ambiguous schemes. He proclaims that there are no Reds and no Whites but simply people, poor, unfortunate, superfluous people.

He is a figure of deep spiritual promise, but living in a time, in a society in which that promise can only be described in negative terms, ironically. So Chekhov called his first real masterpiece "A Boring Story." In a world ruled by secularized faith, freedom is superfluous, metaphysical anguish is boring.

When Pasternak asks: "Am I a monster?" we hear in his *question* the accent of the superfluous man. Certainly his hero, Yurii Zhivago, who is more ambiguous than many of us realized, has qualities of the superfluous man. So do the heroes of Sinyavsky's stories, and so does Sinyavsky himself. Testifying to the court about his own views, he said: "I find it difficult to define my approach; in general terms it is idealistic. I regard Communism as the only goal that can be put forward by the modern mind; the West has been unable to put forward anything like it." The relationship between these two sentences is paradoxical, and the paradox hints at Sinyavsky's detachment not only from Soviet thinking but from the whole cast of the modern secularized mind. Later in the trial, he said:

My writings are complex and strange, and I did not regard them as intended for the mass reader. In my own mind I never regarded my publications abroad as a means of establishing contact with a reading public. It was just a way of preserving them for the few people who, maybe, sometime, might find something of interest in these writings. This is a literature for myself and for a few others, wherever they may live or in whatever age. I actually say this in one of my works.

The Icicle

In the narrator-protagonist of his short novel, *The Icicle*, Sinyavsky has created a new image of the poet, an image drawn from the essential conditions and experiences of life in our time, a figure whose significance goes far beyond his clear autobiographical origin. The narrator-protagonist, who is an ordinary Russian citizen, says in a prefatory note to his story:

I write this story as a castaway tells of his distress. Sitting on a piece of wreckage, or stranded on a desert island, he throws a bottle with a letter into the stormy sea, in the hope that the waves and the wind will carry it to people who will read it and learn the truth long after its poor author is dead.

. . .

My task is even more difficult. Though I have no scientific or literary experience, I want my work to be printed and accorded recognition. Only in this roundabout way can I hope to reach you, Vasily. Oh, Vasily! Believe me when I say that I want, not money or honors, but only your understanding. I need no readers except

you, though my story will pass through many hands, perhaps, before it happens to come your way.

The story is a personal communication. The Vasily he addresses happens, because of the fantastic hypothesis *The Icicle* is based on, to be the author himself in a future incarnation. The "truth" he mentions is not an exposé of political crimes; his message is "Find Natasha and marry her."

This conception of the poet and his audience is very close to an idea Mandelstam expressed in an early essay, and may well derive from it. The essay, "On the Interlocuter," is summarized in Clarence Brown's preface to *The Prose of Osip Mandelstam*:

His conclusion is that a poet must out of necessity address himself to some future reader. It is impossible to be truly free if one is fettered by the knowledge that some particular, familiar, contemporary audience is listening. . . . [Mandelstam] himself observed how providential is the force that drives the mariner's message in its glass bottle across no matter how wide a sea into the hands of the one who is destined to find it.

And Mandelstam's wife, in her memoir about the poet, refers to the same question and quotes, from what I presume is the same essay, a passage in which Mandelstam distinguishes between the poet and the man of letters:

The man of letters as opposed to the poet always addresses himself to a specific audience, to his living contemporaries . . . the content of his writing is decanted into them by virtue of the physical law of unequal levels—which means that the man of letters must be "above" his contemporaries, "superior" to the society in which he lives. . . . Poetry is quite different: the poet is linked only with readers sent his way by Providence and he does not have to be superior to his age, or to the people he lives among.

Sinyavsky brings these ideas to life in the character of his protagonist, but he extends them and develops them in surprising ways through the metaphor of his story.

The Icicle, of all of Sinyavsky's works, has most often been ignored in the West. It also did not figure in his indictment in Russia. The fact is that of all of his writings, it is least open to political interpretation, or political simplification. What happens in *The Icicle* has to do with sight and second sight, with a sudden, chance deepening of the narrator's vision. He is sitting on a bench with his friend Natasha, trying to recall his earliest child-

hood memories, when he suddenly drops out of the ordinary Moscow winter day into a prehistoric world. But then he discovers that this prehistoric world is actually Moscow on that ordinary winter day, but seen through the eyes of a prehistoric man. It turns out that through some trick of memory he has momentarily exchanged places with an ancient incarnation of himself, he has come into touch with all the lives he has lived in the past and apparently also with some of his future lives. And he discovers that he has the same insight into other people, into Boris, Natasha's ex-husband, into the guests at a dinner party, into people he happens to meet on the street. He is able to see the whole of their lives at once, and beyond that some of their former and future lives. Then one day he looks at Natasha and sees that part of her head is missing. He sees another image of her sitting on a bench underneath an icicle that has slowly been forming high up on the side of a building. He realizes that the icicle is going to fall and kill Natasha. But at another time he sees into what must be a more distant future, and Natasha is there again; he is standing outside her window trying to attract her attention, while she sits reading by a lamp. He tries to call to her but she can't hear him because, although he doesn't know it yet, he is dead. It is one of the most moving images in the story:

The window was shut, probably to stop moths, mayflies, and various other insects from coming into the room from the dark garden outside. Yet a few had nevertheless managed to get through, and they swarmed around the lamp, beating their wings against the globe and depositing a faint yellow dust on it. From time to time Natasha raised her head from the book, shook the pages, and looked at the window, but of course she could see nothing in the darkness. Her gaze was full of the vacant longing of a woman who has still not found what she wants in life, and I was tormented by the feeling of my obligations towards her, obligations which were as yet unfulfilled, but were at last about to be. But as I tapped on the window I saw that Natasha did not budge, no doubt taking my signals for the tiresome commotion of the insects. Then, unable to compete with the drumming of their battered wings, I decided that this was because it was all happening in a dream and Natasha couldn't hear my murmurings and my sluggish scratching on the windowpane. So I put off our meeting, climbed down from the balcony, and went home across the garden and the grass swarming with grasshoppers to the other end of town.

Sinyavsky moves with great freedom and inventiveness from low comedy to lyricism, from the real to the fantastic, as he describes the protagonist's experience of his expanded world, but he never achieves a more perfect transformation of the ordinary into the metaphysical than he does in this passage, in which each physical detail intensifies the feeling of mystery.

The narrator recalls this vision at the very end of the story, after he has lost his clairvoyance:

Natasha is alive and sits there reading a book—the very book that I have written, perhaps. And I am writing from here and trying to break in there, not knowing whether this forlorn tapping will ever be heard. . . .

Will you hear it, Natasha? Will you read on to the end, or will you give up halfway through and never know that I was so close? If I only knew! But I don't know and I don't remember. I ought to tell her everything from the beginning. But it's no good. Any moment now she'll close the book. Wait just one second! The story isn't finished yet. I want to tell you one more thing, the last thing I have the strength for . . . Natasha, I love you, I love you. I love you, Natasha. I love you so much, so much. . . .

In *The Icicle* the world, and not only one world but all worlds that have existed through time and will exist in time, becomes personalized, an inner cosmos. Time ceases to be a continual passing away, but it also ceases to be an on-going process. In *The Icicle* time is revealed as a whole which, through a fantastic accident, the narrator is able to see simultaneously. There is no rational way to experience time as a whole; reason insists upon seeing a succession of moments, a process of cause and effect. Only the poet's metaphor can encompass the whole.

When the narrator foresees Natasha's death, he tries to get her away from Moscow and the icicle. They take a train for the Urals, and while they are riding along, the narrator praises the invention of the locomotive in an apostrophe that is really a metaphor of historical time:

Train! Train with the wings of a bird! Who invented you? None but a quickwitted people could have given you birth! Although no artful craftsman of Tula or Yaroslavl, but the cunning English Stephenson, they say, contrived you for the good of the cause, you are yet mightily well fitted to our rolling Russian plain. . . .

And further on:

How pleasant it is to eat your breakfast on a train! And whatever you do, you're on the move! Look out the window, or turn away from it, you're still travelling just the same. Read, smoke, pick your teeth, but all the same you're going on and on, and not a moment of your life is wasted.

While he is apparently praising the march of history, the continual progress of time, what Sinyavsky really captures in this passage is the strange way in which we are bound to time and yet free of it; time moves on relentlessly, taking us with it, and yet we look out the window with complete detachment. Where time is going is of little importance.

And yet time is the condition of human existence. *The Icicle* is not a story about immortality. All of the beings who live within the narrator and *are* the narrator, are subject to the chance interruption of death. The narrator says:

I don't consider myself a pessimist, but I must say in all seriousness that if one thinks closely about the essence of life, it is clear that everything ends in death. There's nothing peculiar about this, and it would even be undemocratic if any one of us were to survive and keep on living. But, of course, we would all like to, and when one thinks that even, say, Leonardo da Vinci had to die, one feels quite helpless.

And towards the end:

You see what's happening all around us? A man lives on and on, but suddenly—bang!—and he's dead; then other people walk around in his place until they too are senselessly destroyed. All you hear around is: bang, bang, bang!

His expanded vision has not released him from his condition as a man; on the contrary, it has intensified his awareness of it. Rebirth into earthly existence is a kind of immortality, but it is far from salvation. Life remains terribly precarious, and he is unable to save it. He says at one point: "I know everything, and can do nothing."

Sinyavsky takes poetic vision literally in *The Icicle*. He replaces the solid, collective, economic base with the living question of human destiny. He opposes the voice of history with the voice of love. Dostoevsky's underground man was unable to love;

that is what made him a tortured man. In *The Icicle* love recovers its authentic voice; it becomes, what Pasternak called it, "an elemental cosmic force wearing a disguise of meekness—in itself as simple and unconditional as consciousness and as death, as oxygen or uranium."

Love, death, and the condition of time are the elementary ground of all human existence. In this sense, Sinyavsky's story has nothing to do with politics. But to the extent that secularizing ideology attempts to replace love, the awareness of death, and the experience of time with patriotism, collective perpetuation, and the laws of historical development, Sinyavsky's story does have political implications, and he is well aware of it. He deals with these implications in the episode with Colonel Tarasov, the police chief who tries to use the narrator as a super-agent and to extract prophecies from him about the glorious Soviet future. The confrontation between the narrator and Colonel Tarasov is a confrontation between two kinds of vision, or between vision and lack of vision. The portrait of Colonel Tarasov, as an image of military-political bureaucracy, is brilliantly satirical. But at the same time it is strangely sympathetic. The truth is that the deeper Sinyavsky goes, the closer he comes to an acceptance of the condition of being human, and the harder it is for him to condemn even a man like Tarasov. This is the miracle of the particular tone of Sinyavsky's writing: with acceptance of the helpless condition of all men comes an unexpected joy, the joy of liberation, which extends through the narrator to all of the characters in the story, even to the man of the future:

Hey! You there, man of the future! Listen to what I say! Don't forget to remember me on that quiet summer evening. Look, I'm smiling at you, I'm smiling in you, I'm smiling through you. How can I be dead if I breathe in every quiver of your hand!

...

I want to warn you, not out of malice or envy, but only out of friendship and fellow feeling, that you too will die. And you will come to us as an equal to equals, and we shall fly on and on into unknown reaches of time and space. This I promise you. . . .

Acceptance, not rebellion, is the final mystery of Sinyavsky's work.

Pasternak

"e quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle."

—Dante, *Inferno*, XXXIV, 139.

In the sacred text of the Russian Easter, the angel says to the women at the tomb: "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" The word for the "living among the dead" in Russian is *zhivago*. The name is suggestive of Pasternak for several reasons: he was almost the last survivor of that supremely gifted generation of artists that was destroyed by Stalin; he was almost the last true poet among the secular functionaries of literature; and, most important, he had made death and resurrection the principle of his creative work and the central metaphor of his vision.

Sinyavsky's judges accused him of harboring a split personality, because he earned his living as a critic and scholar in the Gorki Institute and secretly wrote "anti-soviet" books. But Sinyavsky denied the charge: "The study of literature for me was not a mask, it is my life's work, and there was always a close relationship between my work as a critic and my work as a writer." This relationship is nowhere clearer than in the long introduction he wrote for the 1965 volume of Pasternak's poetry. For Sinyavsky above all Pasternak was "the living among the dead," the decisive influence on his life and work, and what he says about Pasternak in his essay is a commentary on his own position and a final revelation of the figure of the poet.

Pasternak considered his first major book of poems, *My Sister Life*, an outgrowth of the Revolution, but said that in it he "expressed everything that one could find out about a revolution of what was most fantastic and elusive." This is a key statement. Where Pasternak looked, he saw not the march of history but the elusive moments, the most fugitive events of the Revolutionary summer—as Sinyavsky says, "the most ordinary thunderstorms and dawns." But why the elusive, the fugitive, the most ordinary? Pasternak once said that the only thing within our power is "not to alter the voice of life as it resounds within us." But doesn't the voice of life speak, through the "heralds and tribunes of the Revolution," of society's forward march? Not necessarily. Like Sinyavsky after him, Pasternak accepted the Revo-

lution but looked elsewhere for the living images of his poetry. In Paris during the anti-fascist conference of 1935, when the suicides of Yesenin and Mayakovsky had left him the major survivor of early Soviet poetry, Pasternak took the platform only to say:

Poetry remains forever that celebrated height, higher than all the Alps, which is tumbling in the grass, under our feet, so that one has only to bend forward in order to see it and pick it up from the earth.

This kind of talk is dangerous, because it might easily be used to justify a false detachment or to conceal a narrow-minded, reactionary outlook. But Pasternak was neither indifferent nor narrow-minded. He remained in Russia, and wrote several long poems on Revolutionary themes, but always from a personal point of view and with a rapid, inclusive glance that took in the details of the natural world of which the Revolution was only a part.

What is the relationship between poetry and history, according to Pasternak? In answering this question, Sinyavsky summarizes an essay that Pasternak wrote in 1916: "poet and hero, lyrics and history, eternity and time are designated here as categories of different, irreconcilable levels. 'Both of them are a priori and absolute,' and paying his due respects to 'soldiers of absolute history,' the author upheld the right of poetry not to be intertwined with time and not to take up the task of 'making the history of that tomorrow.'" Further on, Sinyavsky observes that Pasternak "is ready to bestow all the high titles on history, on a hero, or on an active person, but he still sets them apart from 'the realm of the poet.'" And again:

In his relationship to history, just as in his relationship to all natural phenomena, the poet is an absorbent sponge, and not a hammer, crushing stone. This sponge sucks up the surrounding environment, becomes heavy with the characteristics of the times, but does not become a part of the social-historical existence to the same extent that it is a part of nature.

Poetry to Pasternak was a natural language, that is, a product of nature, the voice of the "organically happy man" and as much a part of the growth and presence of the world as light and sap, landscapes, storms, and drowsy heat. This awareness of the source

enabled him, especially towards the end of his life, to seek his poems in the most hidden and out-of-the-way places—in backyards and kitchen gardens. And his vision gains in intensity to the extent that the horizon is dominated by the march of history: the fleeting moments of recognition, the elusive voice of life, become even more fleeting and elusive.

Concern with nature led Pasternak finally to a vision of the cosmos and to Christianity. The unity of his world view, and the sense of the fulfillment of his appointed destiny, take their place in the poetry of his last period, of which Sinyavsky says:

Now the metaphor, which still plays an important role, ceases to be the only mediator between things. Their unity is achieved by that breadth and clarity of the poet's world outlook and by that spiritual inspiration of feelings and ideas before which all barriers fall down and life is presented as a great whole, where "nothing can vanish," where man lives and dies in the embrace of the universe. . . .

This passage has many echoes in Sinyavsky's own writings. Even beyond the sympathy he feels for Pasternak, there is a deeper bond between them in the proximity of their creative sources. Their position is embattled because they reject the one-eyed abstractions of propaganda and insist upon seeing life in its full dimensions. Poetry is inclusive, associative, simultaneous, world-building, whereas the reasoning of totalitarian secularization is rigid, narrow-minded, exclusive, and disintegrative. Here again there are two conceptions of time. For secularized thinking, time is what prevents life from being complete or whole; the goal is always yet to come, and the past is like a battlefield after a war, strewn with the rubble of history. For poetic vision, time is a perpetual rising to completeness, continuous last judgment; metaphor is completeness in a fragment, and a single gesture is the complete form of action. The natural movement of life is the transformation of history into poetry—the "sweet-voiced labor" that Mandelstam likened to the work of the bees. Secularization is totalitarian when it attempts to stop or reverse this movement, that is, to limit existence to the plane of history. William Blake spent many days in paradise. And when Dr. Faustus, who suffered time in its smallest subdivisions, asked Mephistopheles what hell was like, the demon said, "Why this is hell, nor am I out of it." Despite the abstractions of secularized

reasoning, life continues to be deep in detail. And poetry, seeking out the voice of life, often strays from the high road of history, turns off in other directions, wanders, circles around, recrosses the road, or perhaps comes out somewhere ahead. Pasternak describes this turning aside in the autobiography he published in 1931:

The world contains death and prevision. The unknown is dear to us, and what is known in advance is frightening, and every passion is a blind leap aside from the onrolling inevitable. Live species would have nowhere to exist and repeat themselves, if passion had nowhere to leap from that common road along which rolls that common time which is the time of the gradual disintegration of the universe.

And he connects the leap of passion with poetry, with "an art which discriminates so wonderfully in us that we are always at a loss to know from what non-historical worlds it has brought its skill to see history in silhouette."

Poetry is the language of simultaneity. Sinyavsky touches on this idea time after time without making a point of it. For instance, he notes: "Pasternak's imagery is always trying to combine different levels of reality in one poetical world-view that is not broken down into individual parts." And again: ". . . for the later Pasternak the decisive prerequisite of artistic victory becomes the great concreteness and simultaneously the spirituality of the imagery." Or in his explanation of the moral bearing of Pasternak's man:

He lives a profound inner life and is committed to the victory of the voluntary sacrifice, self-denial on behalf of the victory of life, and in a fuller and more general way of history and the world spirit. Between the "microcosmos" and the "macrocosmos" in Pasternak's way of thinking, there exists a profound connection, and therefore the individual possesses an absolute meaning, not in animosity and separation from life, but in harmony and unity with it.

What is superfluous to secularized reasoning is essential to poetic vision. In the life's work of Pasternak and in the work of Sinyavsky, the superfluous man of nineteenth-century Russian fiction fulfills his promise: being outside of the march of history, which affords him no place and no security of collective approval, he is constantly exposed to the breadth of existence, to the spaciousness

of the universe, and not blinded by the language of propaganda, he is open to momentary, timeless revelations. Sinyavsky describes Pasternak as one who is "captivated and overwhelmed by the miracle of actual reality, and who 'keeps telling about this one thing,' about the remarkable presence of life."

The possibility of this freedom exists in every moment. It is not subject to decrees and can never be permitted by the State. And it is equally untouched by the moral imperatives that critics of society hurl against the closed doors of politics. This freedom can be taken up by anyone; but it may not give itself easily. Sinyavsky quotes the following passage from one of Pasternak's letters:

It is amazing that the born talent is but a child's model of the universe, implanted from our childhood in our hearts, a school educational device for the comprehension of the world from the inside, from its best and most charming side. Talent teaches us to be honest and fearless, but it discloses the fabulously rich qualities of honesty and of the generally dramatic reason of existence. The talented man would know that life gains tremendously if it is totally and correctly illuminated, and that it loses much in half-darkness. A feeling of personal involvement inspires a feeling of pride and striving for truth. That such an advantageous and happy life in reality can turn out to be a tragedy is of secondary importance.

JONATHAN CHAVES

Translations from Yang Wan-li

Yang (1127-1206) was one of the so-called "four masters of southern Sung poetry," the others being Lu Yu, Fan Ch'eng-ta, and the little known Yu Mao, whose works have largely disappeared.

Yang earned his chin-shih degree in 1154 (the same year as his friend Fan Ch'eng-ta), and embarked upon a fairly typical career in the Chinese bureaucracy. In 1162 he burned all his previous poems, and his earliest surviving work dates from this period. Yang published "a new collection of poems for every office he held," a total of nine books, ending with his Poems Written in Retirement. Toward the end of his life, he showed his political courage by refusing to write an essay about a new garden which was being constructed by the evil Prime Minister, Han T'o-chou.

Yang was married, and his wife gave birth to four sons and three daughters, all of whom she breastfed herself, without using a wet nurse. "What sort of person would I be," she is reported to have said, "if I deprived other children to feed my own?"

Yang's poetry is characterized by the extensive use of colloquialism, which gives his diction a flexibility and expressiveness unusual in Chinese literature. Also remarkable is his attention to the details of the physical world, a concern which may reflect his interest in Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism. An entire poem, for example, will be devoted to describing the movements of a fly. Ch'an consciousness also underlies this statement by Yang on the nature of poetry:

Now, what is poetry?
If you say it is simply a matter of words,
I will say, "A good poet gets rid of words."
If you say it is simply a matter of meaning,
I will say, "A good poet gets rid of meaning."
But, you say, if words and meaning are gotten rid of,
where is the poetry?
To this I reply, "Get rid of words and meaning, and
there is still poetry"

Critical opinion as to Yang's stature as a poet has been sharply divided. Perhaps the most intelligent appraisal of him was made by the great eighteenth-century poet, Yüan Mei:

Someone compared Yüan's poetry with that of Yang Wan-li. Yüan said,

Yang was one of the master poets of the southern Sung. Later critics often made light of his work, but they didn't realize that he was a man of natural genius, like Li Po. It is true that he didn't polish certain flaws in his work, but this was the result of his honesty. I am proud to be considered an imitator of Yang Wan-li.

For further information, see Burton Watson, trans., Yoshikawa Kōjirō, An Introduction to Sung Poetry (Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 161 ff.

THE BOATSMAN'S FLUTE

Today, there is no wind on the Yangtze;
the water is calm and green,
with no waves or ripples.
All around the boat,
light floats in the air
over a thousand acres of smooth, lustrous jade.

One of the boatmen wants to break the silence.
Stoned on wine, he picks up his flute
and plays into the mist.
The clear music rises to the sky—
 an ape in the mountains
 screaming at the moon;
 a creek rushing through a gully.
Someone accompanies on the sheepskin drum,
 his head held steady as a peak,
 his fingers beating like raindrops.

A fish breaks the crystal surface of the water
and leaps ten feet into the air.

PASSING BY HSIN-K'AI LAKE

The fisherman poles his boat across the lake.
My old eyes watch him closely,
 until he does something strange:
he turns into a wild goose, standing on a reed.

EVENING VIEW FROM A BOAT

We sail past a pine tree forest on the river bank.
A man is walking where the trees end.
A mountain moves in front of the man, blocking our view.
The blue flag of a wine shop flutters in the wind.

WATCHING THE MOON FROM THE FISHING BOAT IN THE SNOW
ON A FROSTY NIGHT

I stand by the stream and wait for the moon to rise,
but the moon knows how impatient I am and takes its time.
Tired of waiting, I go home and close the door;
suddenly the moon comes flying up over a thousand peaks!
So I climb to the Fishing Boat in the Snow, and gaze
at the icy wheel hanging from the pine tips.

“As a rule, poets prefer the mid-Autumn moon,”
someone says, but I shake my head:
“The twelfth month is the month for the moon,
when it’s washed by snowflakes and scoured by frost.
Ten thousand miles of deep blue sky, like a pond
with a plate of white jade floating across it.
And then there are the plum blossoms . . .
Mid-Autumn has none of these things.”

(“The Fishing Boat in the Snow” was the name of Yang’s studio.)

CROSSING A BRIDGE

I stop halfway across the flimsy bridge;
the deep water frightens me!
I think of returning—but I'm halfway already!
I think of advancing—but I'm too dizzy to move!
Finally, I make it, but I still look back,
wondering how deep the water was.
Won't anyone rebuild this bridge
so that we travelers can feel more secure?

LIVING IN RETIREMENT—AFTER A NAP
ON AN EARLY SUMMER DAY

The plums are so sour they make my teeth tingle.
Green banana leaves shade the gauze window.
A long day!
Mind empty of thoughts, I rise from my nap
and watch children chasing willow catkins.

AFTER A SERIOUS ILLNESS

I finish my dinner
and take a walk in the eastern garden,
overwhelmed by depression.
Yesterday, when I was lying sick in bed,
I told myself I might never come here again.
Now, as I walk through the gate,
the wind starts to blow harder,
and the pine trees sing mournfully.
My sick body isn't up to this—
I should go back, but I can't help staying.
I stop in front of the southern studio
and rest on the moss-covered steps.
There aren't many flowers,

only two plum blossom trees.
 They must have known I was coming
 and suddenly burst into bloom for me.
 The bamboos also seem full of feeling;
 they sway in the wind, striking strange poses.
 I wonder if they are dancing happily,
 or if they are bending in fear of the wind?
 All of nature seems to welcome Spring;
 I alone am old and sick.
 Tomorrow, will I be able to come again?
 I'll go home now, and stir up the ashes in the fireplace.

I RECOVER FROM AN ILLNESS

ONLY TO FEEL OLD AGE COMING ON

When I was sick, it didn't bother me too much.
 Now that I'm better, I'm starting to feel old.
 But who can be strong and healthy for ever?
 Suddenly, old age will come.

The mountains are chilled by a cold sun.
 Autumn light trickles into my poem.
 A little pine tree sways in the wind,
 imitating the way I stroke my beard as I write.

DRYING CLOTHES

At noon, I leave my clothes out to dry;
 at sunset, I fold them up,
 and carry them home in a willow-wood box.
 The women laugh, and ask each other—
 "Who's that old man with bare feet?"

THE HUDSON REVIEW
ON THE WAY TO T'UNG-LU

I sit napping in my palanquin
 as my cup of tea wears off.
There are no words on the milestones
 along these long mountain roads.
The crows and magpies jabber in a language
 I can't understand.
We pass a loquat tree; every leaf is yellow.

PASSING BY THE PAVILION ON SHEN-CHU BRIDGE

I get down from my palanquin
 and look around the country inn.
I'm surprised by the cold sound of water beneath my feet.
The Yangtze River is closer than I thought—
suddenly, above the bamboo grove,
 an inch of mast floats by.

LISTENING TO RAIN

A year ago, my boat, homeward bound,
 moored at Yen-ling—
I was kept awake all night by the rain,
 beating against the sails.
Last night, the rain fell on the thatched roof
 of my house.
I dreamed of the sound of rain,
 beating against the sails.

READING

When I read, I work hard at it,
 but that makes me tired and dizzy;
 so I put my book down and meditate—
 then the book and I both forget about words.

When I feel like it, I flip the book open—
 suddenly, I've come to the Source of the Sages:
 if I say this is enlightenment—
 basically, there is no enlightenment.
 If I say this is the Mystery—
 there has never been a Mystery.

It's just a moment of happiness
 when I find a passage in harmony with my mind.
 But who creates this happiness?
 It isn't me, and it isn't Nature . . .

What a laugh! All my theories are wrong!
 I throw the book down beside my pillow.

THE PAVILION BEHIND THE TEMPLE

Having visited all the empty rooms,
 I come to a painted balustrade;
 the glow of moonlit bamboo fills the cold pavilion.
 A poem is inscribed on the wall,
 and I wonder who wrote it.
 Stoned on wine, I hold up my candle,
 and look closely at the words.

BANANA LEAVES

When banana leaves are rained on, they are happy:
 all night long they sing, in fresh, graceful tones—

FIRST DAY OF THE FIRST MONTH—

RAIN AND COLD (2 OF 5)

I've patched all the windows and closed the doors;
the tea kettle and wine pot fill the room
with a warm fragrance.

I tell my servant, “Don’t sweep away
the puddles in the courtyard.

I want to watch the raindrops making patterns."

I comb my hair, and sleep overcomes me—
I dream that all my white hairs are being cut out.
I wake up—the wind is leaking through a crack
 in the window,
swinging a spider's web back and forth.

READING IN THE TO-CHIA PAVILION

ON A CLEAR MORNING

Already, a year has gone by
since I became governor of Ching-ch'i.
I can't complain about my office and residence,
but for some reason, I've rarely been happy here.
If my servants aren't sick
my children are crying—
we were once poor and didn't have enough to eat,
but it isn't hunger that's bothering me now.

Early in the morning, I put a book in my sleeve
and climb to the pavilion to do some reading.
The moon and stars are still shining;
there is dew on the ground,
no shutters keep out the wind.

Suddenly, I feel my old, sick body
can't bear clothing any more.
How did I ever get through the recent heat?
The cold is what I really like!

White birds look like butterflies in the distance;
a cicada hums what sounds like a poem.
The pine trees turn my spirit to snow;
I breathe in the icy fragrance of lotus.
In an instant, sadness and happiness
 have disappeared
and I feel as if I've left my body.

The children don't realize what's happening—
they call me down to eat breakfast.

IN THE GORGE—WE ENCOUNTER WIND

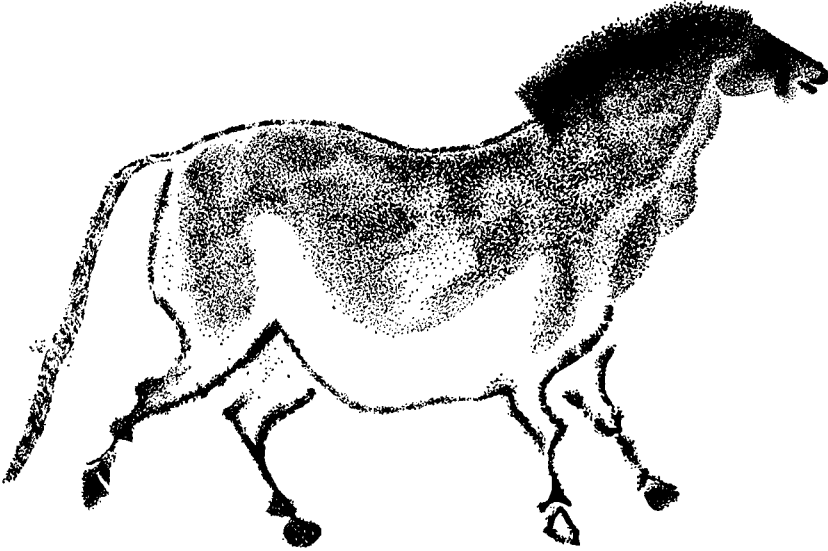
Our boat is becalmed in the middle of the river—
the mountains are silent and gloomy at sunset.
Suddenly, a clap of thunder sounds in the darkening sky,
and the trees along the shore begin to sway.
A powerful wind blows in from the southern sea
and sweeps angrily through the gorge.
The sailors cheer—the great drum is beaten.
One man flies to the top of the mainmast.
As the sail unfurls, I put my hands into my sleeves,
and watch ripples like goose feathers
 swirl in the water.

WRITTEN ON A COLD EVENING

The poet must work with brush and paper,
but this is not what makes the poem.
A man doesn't go in search of a poem—
the poem comes in search of him.

GUY DAVENPORT

Robot



DOWN THERE THE OCHRE HORSE WITH BLACK MANE, black fetlocks, black tail, was prancing as if to a fanfare of Charpentier, though it would have been the music of shinbone fife and a drum that tickled her ears across the tall grass and chestnut forests along the Vézère.

Coencas, tousled haired, naked, and yawning, held Robot in his arms, dodging with lifted chin his wet nose and generous tongue. The campfire under its spit of forked sticks, its ashes ringed by rocks, looked abandoned in the woods light at morning. The crickets had begun again, and a single nightingale trilled through their wild chirr on the slopes beyond the trees.

The old priest was coming from Brive to look at the horses, the reindeer, and the red oxen. He knows more about them, Monsieur Laval had told them, than any man in Europe. More, *d'ailleurs*, than any man in the world.

Ravidat was awake, propped on his elbows in his sleeping bag. In one of the pup tents Agnel and Estreguil lay curled like cats.

A leaf stuck to Estreguil's pink cheek. He had slept in a sweater, socks, and hat. Agnel's knees were near his chin.

Queroy and Marsal were asleep in the other tent under Ravidat's canvas jacket.

Since Thursday they had lived with the tarpans of the Dordogne in their eyes.

—Friday the thirteenth, Coencas said. *C'était par bonheur, la bonne chance.*

—We felt them on Thursday, Ravidat said, as when you know somebody's in the house without seeing or hearing them. They knew *we* were there

—Scare me, Estreguil said, so I can scare Agnel.

Ravidat stretched kneeling, his open blue shirt that had bunched around his shoulders in sleep tumbling down his arched back like a crumpled piece of the September sky above them. He stood, naked but for his shirt, fell forward into ten brisk push-ups while Robot barked in his face, then rolled onto his back and pedalled his long legs spattered with leafshadow in the sharp morning air.

—Ravidat, Marsal said gloomily from his tent, is having a fit.

—Show me, Estreguil said.

—*Et alors, mes troglodytes*, Coencas hailed the tents, help me get a fire going.

Estreguil crawled out in silly haste. Agnel rolled behind him. Robot studied them anxiously, looking for signs of a game.

RAVIDAT HAD POINTED ON THURSDAY toward the slope across the Vézère.

—He is over there! he called through cupped hands.

The others were catching up. Coencas had whittled a staff and was whacking thistle and goldenrod with it. Marsal put two fingers in his mouth and whistled like a locomotive.

Ravidat was watching the shaken sedge across the river where Robot nosed his way. He was seventeen, long of jaw, summer brown. His eyes were glossy black discs set in elm-leaf outlines of boyish lashes. His new canvas jacket smelled of pipeclay and gunpowder. His corduroy trousers were speckled with beggar's lice and sticktight. Over his shoulder he carried his uncle Hector's old octagon-barreled breechloader.

The Vézère was low, for the summer had been dry, and the reeds along its bank were thick with dragonflies and quivering gnats.

Through a stand of scrub oak and plum bushes as yellow as butter the others filed toward him, Marsal with the other rabbit gun, Queroy with the sleeves of his sweater tied around his neck, Coencas in short blue pants, ribbed socks, a scab on one knee, brown cowlick over an eye, Estreguil sharp-nosed under a grey fedora, and little Agnel, who carried a frog.

The hum of an airplane had stopped them.

—Robot is over there on the slope, Ravidat said.

—A Messerschmidt, Coencas said. The Heinkels are much shriller.

—See my frog.

—When your hands are all warts where he's peed on you, Queroy said, we'll see your frog.

—The Stukas were so low we could hear them before we could see them, Coencas said. When a car stalled, or got hit, the people in the cars behind it would jump out and roll it in the ditch.

—They wouldn't roll *my* car in the ditch, Queroy said.

—They would, if you got kicked in the balls, like one man I saw. There were fights all the time. But when the Stukas came over the road, going down it with their machineguns *rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat*, everybody took to the fields, or woods if there were any. Afterwards, there were *burning* cars to get off the road.

Agnel watched Coencas' face with worried eyes.

—They are over there, Coencas said, pointing northwest.

Queroy spread his arms like a Stuka and ran in circles.

—Queroy is a Nazi, Estreguil said.

Estreguil was all dirty gold and inexplicably strange to look at. His hair was the brown of syrup, with eddies of rust spiralling in and out of the whorls of bright brass. His eyes were honey, his face apricot and wild pale rose over the cheeks. He had been to Paris, however, and had seen real Germans on the streets, had heard them pound on their drums. Coencas had only seen the bombers. Agnel didn't know what he had seen.

—You might have to live forever in Montignac, Marsal said. The Germans may never let you go back home.

—I'm glad, Queroy said.

—*Merde alors*, Ravidat said. Then he shouted across the river:

—*Bouge pas, Robot!*

—He's going up onto the *hectares* of the Rochefoucauld, Marsal said.

—We can cross down at the meadow ford, Ravidat said, leading the way. Marsal and Coencas joined him, and the three little boys came in a cluster behind, Agnel's frog puffing its throat and swimming with a free hind leg. Estreguil's large grey fedora was a gift from Madame Marsal, Jacques' mother.

Robot had met them halfway up the slope, splashing his tail from side to side. His feet were still too big and he still fell when he wheeled. He squeaked when he barked and he squatted to pee, like his mother, which he did with a laugh, lolling tongue, and idiot eyes. He had never in his life seen a rabbit.

He thrashed his tail while Ravidat tickled him behind the ears.

—Find us a rabbit, old boy, Ravidat said. Find us a rabbit.

Robot let out his tongue in an ecstasy and rolled his tail.

—When the Nazi tanks turn, Coencas was explaining, they don't do it like an auto. It comes, *bram! bram! bram!* to a corner. If it's turning right, the right tread stops, *clunk!* and the left keeps the same speed, spinning it right around.

He swung his left leg out.

—And when it's facing the street it's turning into, the right tread starts again. Sparks fly out of the cobbles. Keen.

Queroy turned like a tank, spraying leaves.

—Are the rabbits just *anywhere* around here? Estreguil asked. Are they hiding?

They entered the oak forest at the top of the hill. The silence inside made them aware of the cricket whirr in the fields they had left, and the cheep of finches in the tall September grass. They could no longer hear the drone of the airplane. Caterpillars had tented over the oleanders.

The hills of the Dordogne are worn down to easy slopes, and outcroppings with limestone facings slice across the barrows of the hills.

—*C'est bien ajusté le slip Kangourou?* Coencas slapped Ravi-

dat on the behind.

—*Va à ravir*, Ravidat laughed. *Et marche aussi comme un coq en pâte.*

—*Capiteux, non?*

Ravidat leaned his gun carefully against an alder, unbuckled his belt, unbuttoned his fly, lowered his trousers, and raised his shirt tail. He was wearing a pair of Coencas' underpants cut like swimming briefs, trim, succinct, and minimal.

—They're the new style from Paris, Ravidat explained. They are called *Kangourous*.

—Because you jump in them! Agnel squealed.

—Because your *queue* sticks out of the pouch when you want it, Estreguil said. *Idiot!*

—Has your peter got bigger still? Queroy asked. His was as yet a little boy's, his testicles no bigger than a fig.

Marsal, like Coencas, was old enough to have his aureole of amber hair, but Ravidat was already a man, full bushed in black.

—Let us see, Queroy said.

They looked at the rose heft of its glans with professional curiosity, the twin testicles plump and tight, Marsal and Queroy with envy, Coencas more complacently, though he felt his mouth going dry. Ravidat admired himself with animal pride.

Agnel considered these mysteries briefly and held out his frog to a tangle of gnats dancing in the air.

—Don't hurt him, Estreguil said. Will he eat the gnats?

Coencas slid his hand down into his short pants, stuck out his tongue in sweet impudence, and bounced on his toes.

—*Attendez!* Marsal said quickly, his voice hushed.

Robot was crashing through leaves. His tenor bark piped down the slope.

Ravidat stuffed his cock back into his shorts and the frog leapt from Estreguil's hands.

Ravidat held his gun, which he had grabbed, against his chest with his chin while he did up his trousers. Marsal was already away among the trees. Then they all galloped down the hill, elbows out for balance.

—Up and around! Marsal shouted.

—Show me the rabbit! Agnel cried from behind them.

Ravidat and Marsal were out front, stalking to the top of the

slope, sighting along their guns. Coencas, his stick at the ready, was at their backs with Estreguil and Queroy.

—Say if you see my frog, Agnel said.

—Everybody stop! Ravidat cried. Keep quiet.

The woods were wonderfully silent.

—He went down the slope, Marsal said quietly, and then across, down there, and up again, didn't he?

—If he catches it, will he eat it? Estreguil asked.

—Shut up.

Robot was barking again. They turned together.

—Show me the rabbit, Agnel said, falling backwards.

They ran around him.

—How did the dumb dog get *behind* us? Ravidat asked.

They plunged down the hill, looking, jumping for a better look, kneeling for a better look. The familiar oakwood as they ran through it became unfamiliar and directionless, as though it had suddenly lost its ordinariness.

Agnel tripped and fell, spewing up a dust of leaves. Ravidat and Coencas bounded over fallen trees, their mouths open like heroes in a battle. Marsal was more methodical, sprinting with his gun at port arms.

—Everybody still! he shouted.

Only Agnel kept padding on behind them.

—I hear Robot, Marsal said, but damned if I know where.

The woods were all at once quiet. The distances were deepening dark.

Then they heard Robot. His bark was vague and muted, as if down a well. It was beneath them.

—Holy God, Ravidat said.

—Quiet!

Marsal went on all fours and cocked his ear. Robot was howling like a chained puppy. Then he began to whimper.

—*Robot!* Ravidat called. Where *are* you? *Eh, mon bon bougre, où es tu, hein?*

Marsal began to move on hands and toes.

—He's under the ground, Ravidat. In a fox den or rabbit burrow.

—He'll come out, Ravidat said. I'll bet he has a rabbit.

—Show me, Agnel said.

Marsal was walking around the hill, signalling for the others to follow. They could hear Robot's howls more distinctly as they clambered over an ancient boulder, a great black knee of stone outcropping. They came to the upended roots of a fallen cedar.

—He's down there! Marsal said.

The cedar in falling had torn a ragged shellhole in the hillside, and the weather had melted it down in upon itself. There was a burrowmouth at the back of the cavity, down which Ravidat, lying on his stomach, shouted.

—Robot!

An echo gave back *bó! bó! bó!*

—Get out of there! Ravidat coaxed. Come up, old boy! Come up!

Marsal gave a keen whistle.

—He's a hell of a long way down, Coencas said. You can tell.

Ravidat took off his canvas jacket, throwing it to Marsal.

—I'm going in after him.

—The hole's too small.

—Only the hole. You heard that echo. It's a cave.

—Sticks, Marsal ordered. Everybody find a good stick.

Agnel set to, arms over his head. Marsal drew his hunting knife and began to hack at the edges of the hole.

—It goes in level, he said. It must drop later on.

Estreguil came dragging a fallen limb as long as a horse. Ravidat brought a leafy length of white oak, stripping branches from it as he dragged it up to the hole.

—Let's get this up in there, he said, and walk it back and forth.

Ravidat and Coencas on one side, Marsal and Queroy on the other, like slaves at the oar of a trireme, they pushed and pulled, grinding the rim of the hole until Ravidat said that he thought he could crawl in.

—Go in backwards and feel with your feet, Marsal said. You can climb out then if you get stuck.

His legs in to the hips, he walked his elbows backwards, calling out, *Courage, Robot! Je viens!*

A half-circle of faces watched him: Marsal's big grey eyes and tousled brown hair, Queroy's long Spanish face with its

eyes black as hornets, Coencas' flat-cheeked lean face, all olive and charcoal, Estreguil's long-nosed, buck-toothed blond face with its wet violet eyes, Agnel's taffy curls and open mouth full of uneven milk teeth.

Level light from the setting sun shone on Ravidat's face.

—We ought to have a rope, Marsal said.

—It goes down here, Ravidat's muffled voice came out. There's a ledge.

He lowered his feet, loose rotten stone crumbling as he found footholds. His elbows on the ledge, he struck a heap of scattering objects with his feet. They must lie on something. He dropped.

—I'm on another ledge! his distant voice rose, as if from behind closed doors several rooms away. I'm standing in a muck of bones. It's a graveyard down here!

Earth poured on him in rivulets. An ancient dust, mortuary and feral, lifted from the bones he had disturbed. Coencas was wriggling in head first, loosening pebbles and sliding loam.

—Matches, he said, reaching down into the dark.

Then he said:

—I'm coming down!

Ravidat caught him, shoulders and arms, so that the one, his feet still in daylight, hugged upside down the other standing in dark bones. They could hear Agnel saying:

—I'm next!

Coencas pivoted down, crashing onto the bones beside Ravidat.

—We're on a ledge, I think. Feel with your foot.

Coencas struck a match. White clay in striated marl beside them, utter blackness beyond and below, where Robot whined and yelped. Another match: the bones were large, bladed ribs in a heap, a long skull.

—Bourzat's ass!

—Queroy! Jacques! Ravidat shouted upwards. Last year, when old Bourzat's ass disappeared, you remember? Here it is!

—It was just about when that storm blew this old tree over, you're right, Marsal shouted down. You're right.

—Does it stink? Agnel hollered.

Another match showed that the ledge dropped at a fierce

angle, but could be descended backwards, if there were footholds.

—Keep striking matches, Ravidat said. I'm going down.

Robot had found a rhythm, three yelps and a wail, and kept to it.

—There's no more ledge. I'm going to drop.

A slipping noise, cloth against stone, and then Coencas heard the *whomp* of feet on clay far below him in the dark.

—Robot, he heard, *ici, ici, vieux bougre*.

—I hear Robot's tongue and tail, Coencas said upward. Everybody come on down. It's a long drop after this ledge.

Coencas lowered himself from the ledge of bones and fell lightly onto soft clay.

—We're here, Ravidat said from solid dark.

Marsal and Queroy were inside, handing down Agnel and Estreguil.

—Can we get back *out*? Marsal asked.

—*Qui sait?* Coencas said in the voice of Frankenstein's monster, and his words, full of grunts and squeals, rolled around them.

—Is the rabbit down here, too? Estreguil said, panting.

—Can we *breathe*?

—Here's the far wall.

A match showed it to be calcined and bulbous, a white billow of stone. The floor was uneven, ribbed like river sand, pot-holed, an enormous round-bottomed gully.

—I've never been so dark before, Agnel said.

—You're *scared*! Estreguil said.

—So are you.

—It keeps going back, Ravidat's hollow voice boomed in a strange blur.

—I've got two more matches.

The hole through which they had entered was a dim wash of light above them.

—Agnel, Ravidat said beside them, take Robot. *Here!* Keep steady with one hand. Hold onto Robot with the other. Coencas is going to stand on my shoulders, and push you up to the ledge. *D'accord?*

—Good old Robot! Estreguil said.

Ravidat braced himself against the wall. Coencas, Estreguil and the dog under his arm, climbed onto his shoulders.

—Stand on your toes, Ravidat, Coencas said. I think we're just going to reach.

Estreguil pushed Robot onto the bone ledge. Then, skinning both knees, he clambered up himself. Agnel went up next, and had to come down again: he couldn't reach the ledge from Coencas' shoulders.

—You go up, Queroy, Ravidat said, and pull Agnel up when you get there.

Marsal went up next, showered them with dirt and pebbles, and hollered down:

—How are *you* going to get up?

—Get that long limb, Ravidat commanded. Poke it in, and you four bastards hold onto it for all you're worth.

Coencas climbed out first, using the limb as a rope, and Ravidat followed. The clarity of the long summer twilight still held. Robot was in Agnel's arms.

—We have, Ravidat said in a level voice, discovered a cave.

—Tell nobody, Marsal said. Estreguil! Agnel! You understand? *Nobody*. It's our cave.

—Find my frog, Agnel said.

—It's a damned *big* cave, Ravidat said. And Marsal and Queroy know what I'm thinking.

—What? asked Coencas. What is there to think about a cave?

AT THE FORD Agnel fell into the Vézère. They dressed him in Queroy's sweater, and Ravidat carried him piggyback to the great spreading beech in Montignac.

—*Regardez les grands chasseurs!* the old men at their coffee sang out. Agnel had gone to sleep, Robot sat and let his tongue hang down, and Ravidat gave a confidential nod to the Catalan garage mechanic.

What he wanted, once they were leaning nonchalantly against the castle wall across the road from the beech and the elders, was grease. Old grease. And the use, for a day, of the old grease gun that had been retired since the new one arrived.

—Grease, my goose?

Precisely. The use to which it was to be put would be known in time. Meanwhile, could it be a matter among friends?

—*Seguramente.*

And he needed it first thing in the morning.

Queroy, Marsal, and Estreguil were to come out to the cave as soon as they were out of school. They could bring Agnel. Better to keep him in on it than have him pigeon.

—Meet me, Ravidat said to Coencas, at the flat rock on the river as soon as you're up. *Va bien?*

Bien. He heard the Heinkels in the night, and the cars of the refugees going through Montignac, headed south. He thought of the armies north and west, of white flares falling through the night sky, and of the long clanking rocking tanks that would most certainly come south. An old man under the great tree had said that the French battle flags had been taken to Marseille and had been paraded through the streets there. They were on their way, these flags, to the colonies in Africa.

BY COCKCROW he was up, making his own bowl of coffee, fetching the day's bread from the baker, as a surprise for his mother. He left a note for her saying that he would be back in the afternoon, and that he would be just south of town, in the Lascaux hills.

On the flat rock when he got there lay Ravidat's shoes and socks, trousers, canvas jacket, blue shirt and Kangourou underpants. Ravidat himself was swimming up the river toward him. He stripped and dove in, surfacing with a whoop. Ravidat heaved himself out of the river and sat on the flat rock, streaming. The day was a clear grey, the air sweet and cool. He walked in his lean brown nakedness to a plum bush from which he lifted a haversack that Coencas had not seen. Inside, as he showed the wet, grinning Coencas, was a long rope, the grease gun, and a thermos of coffee.

—A sip now, he said, the rest for later.

They dried in the sun. The coffee was laced with a dash of cognac.

—What do you think we're going to see? Coencas asked.

—You'll see when you see.

They secured the rope outside the cave, and let themselves down the shelved clay. Ravidat lit a match and fired the grease gun: the kind of torch with which he had gigged frogs at night. The flame was greenish yellow and large as a handkerchief. Ravidat held it high over his head.

Neither spoke.

Everywhere they looked there were animals. The vaulted ceiling was painted, the crinkled walls lime white and pale sulphur were painted with horses and cows, with high-antlered elk and animals they did not know. Between the animals were red dots and geometric designs.

—Did you know they were here?

—Yes, Ravidat said. They had to be.

The torch showed in its leaping flare a parade of Shetland ponies bounding like lambs. Above them jumped a disheveled cow like the one in *Mère Oie* over the moon. Handsome plump horses trotted one after the other, their tails arched like a cat's.

The cave branched into halls, corridors, tunnels.

They found long-necked reindeer, majestic bulls, lowing cows, great humped bison, mountain goats, plaited signs of quadrature lines, arrows, feathers, lozenges, circles, combs.

All the animals were in files and herds, flowing in long strides down some run of time through the silence of the mountain's hollow.

—They are *old*, Ravidat said.

—*Tout cela est grand*, Coencas said, *comme Victor Hugo*.

—They are prehistoric, like the painted caves of the Trois Frères and Combarelles. You have not been to them?

The cave was even larger than Ravidat had thought. It branched off three ways from where he had lit the torch, and two of these passages branched off in turn into narrow galleries where the floor was not clay but cleft rock. Their echoes rounded in remote darkness.

—It goes on and on.

They heard shouts outside: Marsal, Queroy, Estreguil, Agnel. They were out of school.

—Come look! Ravidat called up to them. It is Noah's Ark down here!

THEY TOLD no one of the cave for three days. On the fourth they told their history teacher, Monsieur Laval, who had once taken them to the caves at Combarelles and Les Eyzies. He came out to the cave, trotting the last steep ten metres. When they held the torch for him, he gripped his hands and tears rimmed his eyes.

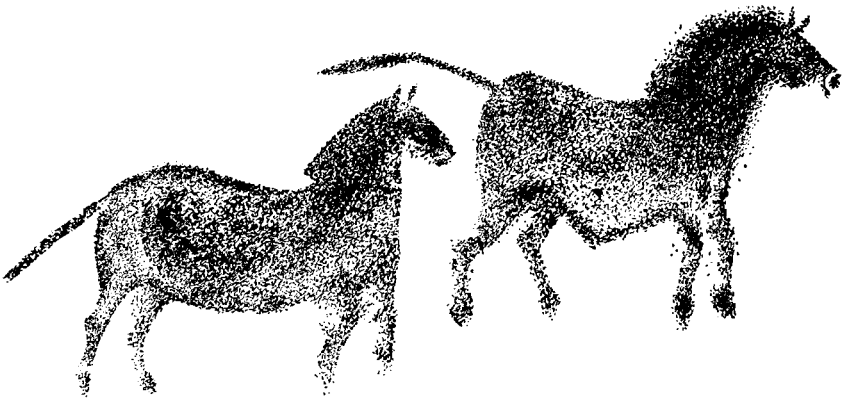
—Of all times! Of all times!

He found a lamp by which the painters had worked, the mortar in which the colors were ground, the palette.

Coencas found another lamp, a shallow dish in which a wick soaked in deer fat had lit the perpetual night of the cave.

They began to find, sunk in the clay of the floor, flint blades, though most of them were broken. They found most of these shattered stone knives, thirty-five of them in all, just beneath the buffalo and the herd of horses.

—Maurice Thaon! Monsieur Laval said. We must get Maurice Thaon. He will know who must be told.



BREUIL, Thaon, who came the next day, bringing a block of drawing paper, told them, is just over at Brive-la-Gaillarde with Bouysonnie, would you believe it?

Ravidat held the torch while he drew.

—I had a note from him last week. He will be frantic. He will dance a dance in his soutane. He will hug us all. The war has driven us all together here, and we have found the most beautiful cave of them all.

—Lascaux, he said, as if to the horses that seemed to quiver in the torchlight. Lascaux.

The postman went to Brive on the nineteenth with Monsieur Laval's note addressed to L'Abbé Henri Breuil, whom he had the distinguished honor of informing that in a hillside on the estate of the Comtesse de la Rochefoucauld a prehistoric cave with extensive paintings had been discovered by some local boys. Knowing the eminent prehistorian would like to inspect this very interesting site, he awaited word from him and begged him to accept his most elevated sentiments.

Thaon arrived later the same day with drawings.

—A car! the Abbé shouted. Do we have the petrol? For myself, I can walk.

They drove up the next day at the Great Tree of Montignac in the Abbé Bouysonnie's wheezing Citroën. Laval mounted their runningboard and directed them to the Lascaux hills.

Robot barked them to a halt.

—Here we are! Monsieur Laval said, shifting from foot to foot and waving his arms as if he were conducting a band.

The six boys, all with uncombed hair, stood in front of the automobile. L'Abbé Breuil herded them before him like so many geese.

—Brave boys, he cried, wonderful boys.

He stopped to look at their camp, shaking hands even with Estreguil and Agnel, who had never shaken hands with anybody before.

—I am decidedly prehistorical myself, is that what you're thinking, *mon gosse*?

Estreguil broke into a wide smile. He instantly liked the wide-backed old priest.

—Oh, I'm well beyond halfway to a hundred, and then some, he said to Agnel.

Then he turned to Ravidat, who stood with Robot in his arms.

—And that's the pooch to whom we're indebted, is it?

He patted the suspicious Robot, and mussed Ravidat's hair.

They promptly forgot that this was the man who knew more about prehistoric caves than anybody else in Europe. He was simply an easy old priest with a wounded eye. His face was long,

rectangular, big-eared, with strong lines dropping to comfortable pendules and creases under his jaws. A silken wattle hung under his chin. The grey bristles of his thick eyebrows rose and fell as if part of the mechanism of his meticulous articulateness.

—My eye? Prehistory got it. We've been climbing around Les Eyzies all week, Bouysonnie and I, and one of your indestructible bushes, through which, mind you, I was making my way in clear forgetfulness of my age, whacked me in the eye. I see lights in it, rather beautiful.

—But I'm forgetting my manners. This is Dr. Cheynier, who has come to help me, he said to the boys as if uncovering a surprise, and this is Monsieur l'Abbé Bouysonnie, who is an expert in primitive religions. And we're all anxious to enter the cave, if you are ready.

The first thing the Abbé's electric lamp found inside the cave was a rabbit.

It sat chilled with fear in the cone of light, its sides shivering. Marsal and Ravidat moved beside it just outside the beam, and the one chased it into the other's arms.

—We've not seen it the whole time we've been down here, Ravidat said.

—*He* was the first one in! Coencas said.

—Take him up, the Abbé said, and let him loose, and don't let the dog get him. He must be famished.

They heard Agnel shouting above.

—The rabbit! The bunny!

Light after light came on. A star trembled on the Abbé's horn-rimmed glasses. Silent, he looked. His weathered right hand was on Marsal's shoulder, as if he needed to touch the force that brought him here. A battery of lights shifted over their heads. Ravidat held the largest. Queroy aimed a long flashlight.

With his left hand the Abbé traced in the air the suave curves of a horse's back and belly.

—The colors! The tints! The gaiety of their movements! The wit of the drawing, the intelligencel

—They *are* old, are they not, Monieur l'Abbé?

—Yes, *mon cher Laval*, no doubt at all of that.

He pointed higher, the lights climbing with his aim.

—They are as old as Altamira. Older, far older, than civilization.

A long cow faced her bull in the heart of the cave, the titan grandmother of Hathor and the cows of Africa upon whom the Nuer people still wait, burnishing their hair with her urine, imagining the female sun between her horns, replenishing the divine within human flesh with her holy blood.

With them run, as if pacing to the music of the first voice of the world, horses, elk, bears, and a spotted animal whose only portrait occurs here and whose bones have never been found. This first voice, the discourse of waters and rain, of wind in leaves and grass and upon mountain rocks, preceded the laugh of the jackal and the voices of the animals themselves, the rising wind of the cow's low, the water voice of the horse, the trumpet of the elk, bleat of the deer, growl of the bear.

In the Abbé's left eye trembled a jangle of red. He saw the prancing horse the color of crust through a snow of fireflies.

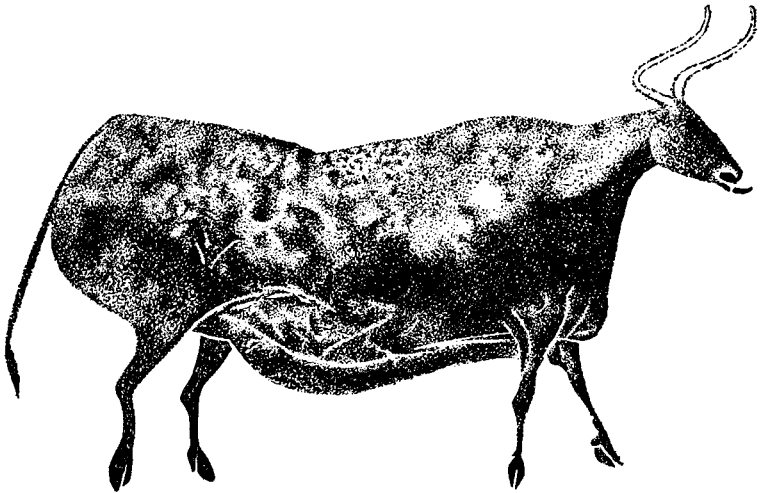
—Thaon brought me a drawing of this.

And of a line of reindeer:

—They are swimming a river. I have seen the motif before, carved on bone.

He worked the clay of the floor in his fingers.

—The bears were going when this cave was painted. Man could enter. The Aurignacian snow owl still drifted in at twilight, for the mice. One can imagine the sound of her wings in this stillness. The red rhinoceros was too blind to venture so



much dark. The world belonged to the horse, the tarpan, the reindeer. Lion was terrible, but man could smoke him out of the caves, and lion, when the encounter came, was afraid of horse. The old elephants kept to themselves, eating trees.

They found the horse drawn upside down.

—Falling, do you suppose? Or weren't they oriented to the horizon, to the vertical? And these signs, these hieroglyphs! Are we ever going to read them, Bouysonnie?

They climbed out for lunch, cold chicken and mayonnaise and wine which Abbé Bouysonnie brought in two hampers, with Camembert and bread for dessert.

—It is a very great thing, is it not? Dr. Cheynier asked Abbé Breuil.

—So great that I sit here stunned. *Absolument bouleversé!* If there is a reason for my hanging on to such a disgraceful old age, it was to see this cave. A rabbit, a dog named—do I remember right?—Robot, these boys, a doctor's ration of petrol—he winked at Peyronie—and I suppose we must even give grudging thanks to the filthy *boches* for driving me from Paris. A veritable conspiracy of Providence!

Bouysonnie smiled.

—You've *always*, my dear Henri, been just around the corner from the discoveries, when, indeed, you weren't yourself the discoverer.

—I have, the Abbé said, I have.

He turned to the boys. Estreguil, who was sucking his fingers, was embarrassed.

—I have been around. Africa, oh yes, and China even. I was in China with a nephew of Voltaire who was quite close to his accomplished granduncle in spirit and brains. The church, in fact, thinks him too very much like his uncle, in a different sort of way. We went to China to look for the deep, the *very* deep, past of man. At Tcheou-kou-tien, a village some thirty-five kilometres below Peking, just under the lovely Fang Mountains—the Fang shan—*shan* is *mountain*—we found a very old skull, four-hundred thousand, perhaps five-hundred thousand years old. Five hundred thousand years old! *Cinq cent mille ans!*

He looked at each boy in turn, to make certain that they were following.

—Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, that was my friend in China, the nephew of Voltaire. A tall man, all angles like a proper Jesuit. Me, I'm just a parish priest. They called us Don Quichote and Sancho Panza, our friends in those days. A man name of Pei made the actual discovery. We went to look at the tools. I was most interested in fire, and the ancient men of Peking definitely had that. As a matter of fact they cooked and ate each other.

—Ate each other!

It was Estreguil who interrupted, and Agnel looked at him as if he knew more about the subject than the old priest.

—Most prehistoric people did, Abbé Breuil said, rolling a cigarette.

—What *are* these caves? Dr. Cheynier asked.

—Arks for the spirits of animals, I think. The brain is inward, where one can see without looking, in the imagination. The caves were a kind of inward brain for the earth, the common body, and they put the animals there, so that Lascaux might dream forever of her animals, as man in the lust of their beauty and in need of their blood, venison, marrow, and hides, and in awe of their power and cunning, thought of them sleeping and waking.

He drank back the last of his wine and held his cup out for more.

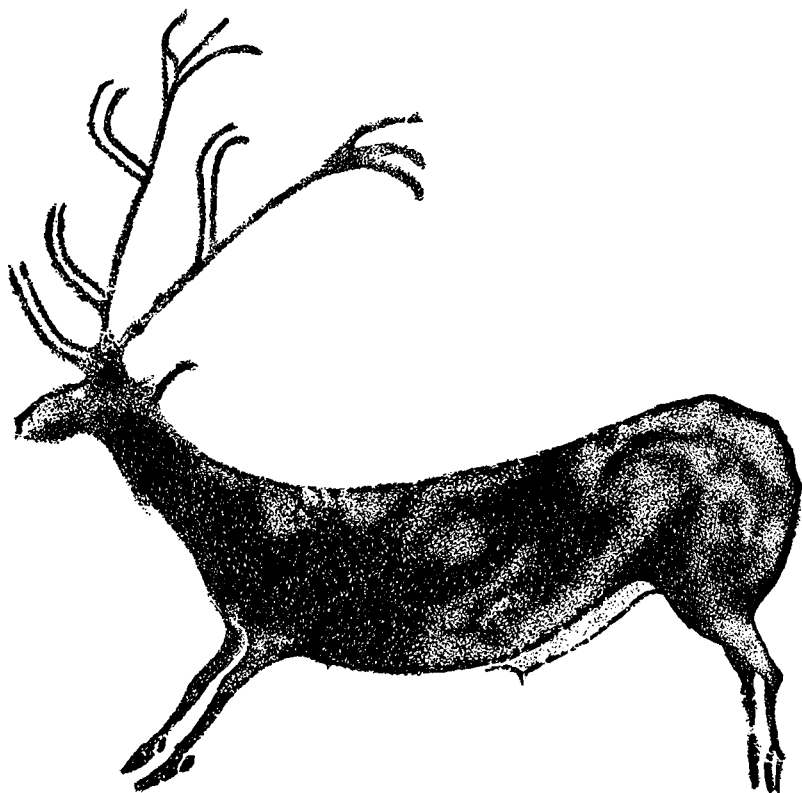
—They were neither gods nor fetishes nor kinfolk nor demons nor mere food, but something of all.

An airplane buzzed in the distance.

—The animals themselves have sometimes confronted us, you know! I mean bones, and the mammoths found frozen in Siberia, I mean the beasts themselves in all their ruin, as distinct from paintings, engravings, carvings.

Coencas was trying to see the airplane.

—Listen carefully. In the Swiss Alps, up the side of the majestic Drachenberg, five thousand feet above the valley floor, you can find the entrance to a cave. It was in its day a hunters' cave. Inside it we have found all sorts of bones: wolf, lion, chamois, stag, even hare, who was a hefty alpine fellow in those times, before the last Ice Age locked all that world into a solid glacier and thousands of years of snow.



—Now the cave bear, an enormous creature now extinct, was a kind of god, or totem. They broke his bones and sucked out the marrow after they had eaten his flesh and rendered his grease and dressed themselves in his hide. But they placed his skull reverently on ledges in open caves, looking outward, sometimes as many as fifty, all looking outward with their eye sockets, formidable I assure you, especially when they are found, as in the cave of the Drachenberg, covered with ten thousand years of dust.

—Fine dust, not quite half an inch thick. It looks as if the skulls were sculpted of dust.

—The snouts of these dread cave bears are all pointed out toward the sunrise, each in its hump of dust, its mask of dust, and each with its pair of empty bear eyes under a brow of dust.

The lower jaws have all been removed, so that the long yellow teeth hang more bear-like in the dark while the sun, morning after morning for twenty thousand years, found the skulls on their ledges. It was like a shop with nothing to sell on its shelves but skulls of bears.

Estreguil and Agnel put their arms around each other.

—You have, some of you, the Abbé said to the boys, been to Combarelles and Font-de-Gaume, Monsieur Laval has told me. It was I who discovered them, oh years and years ago, when your parents were infants. So you see, you have been in my caves and now I have been in yours. *Nous sommes confrères!*

—You are not, you know, the first boys to have discovered a paleolithic cave, though it seems that you have found the most beautiful of them all.

—Three strapping fine brothers discovered Le Tuc d'Audoubert and Les Trois Frères. They were in their teens when they found the Tuc, and soldiers home on leave from that other awful war when they found the cave that's named for them. Max, Louis, and Jacques de Bégouën they were. Their father is the Comte de Bégouën, Henri as he must always be to me, as I am Henri to him. He was retired after a lovely career of politics and owning a newspaper and such terrible things to a house in the Ariège, near St. Giron, though he has never really retired. He is, if I can put it euphemistically, a man who has never lost his taste, bless him, for the good things of this life.

—His dear wife died early, leaving him three sons to bring up. We may note that they were brought up very well indeed, if just a touch wild, young wolves even in their Sunday best. And the Count Bégouën, never stinting his love of good food, a splendid cellar, and a gracious lady with which to share them, is now in his eightieth year, as hale as a prime bull.

—But I'm getting off my subject as if I were eighty myself. On the Bégouën property, Montesquieu-Avantès, the little river Volp runs right through a largish hill, in one side, out the other. What else must a boy do, I need not tell you, but build a raft of oil-cans and wooden boxes, and paddle himself into that cave?

—That's what Max did, oh most decidedly. A farmer thereabouts, François Camel, had been as far up the Tuc d'Audoubert end of the mountain as where you can't go any farther un-

less you are a weasel, but that never stopped a boy, to my knowledge.

—They *all* went, of course, Jacques and Louis too. They got to a kind of beach and, what do you know, they came across an inscription scratched there in the eighteenth century. They had to turn back, but not for long. They came back and hacked the weasel hole until they could get into it. They found that it was a *gours*, a chimney in the rock, and up it they scampered, forty feet.

—When we turned the rabbit loose that Robot chased into the cave, Estreguil said, he ran as if the Germans were after him!

—*Taise-toi!* Ravidat said. *Où sont tes bonnes manières?*

The Abbé sighed, and smiled.

—And what did they find there? Sculpture! The very first prehistoric discoveries were of course sculpture, carved pebbles and bones, but this was modelled in clay, two bison, two bison more-over about to copulate. Close by they found the heelprints of children, such as Cartailhac would find later, also in the heart of a mountain, around the headless statue of a bear, with evidence that a real bear's head had been staked onto it. Both these sites seem to have been the occasion of a single ceremony. The animals were shaped by the light of a torch, who knows with what sacred dread, and children danced on their heels, and the cave was closed forever.

—The curious thing about this cave is that if you were to drill through the rock in the right direction you would come to the end of another cave, the Trois Frères, which the Bégouën boys found in 1916. At the uttermost recess of *it* is that strange sorcerer, or god, a man dancing in a mask with a beard. He wears antlers, a horse's tail, bear's paws. His sex is human, but it is placed where a cat's is, under the tail. He is our oldest portrait of God.

—The caves are the first draft of the book of Genesis, when man was a minor animal, not suspecting that the divine fire in his heart was unique. He was thousands of years away from the domesticating of these animals. The dog was the first. He is man's oldest friend.

Abbé Breuil lit his pipe.

—Oh, Robot knew they were down there! He is one of them. I'm afraid I've already scandalized the archbishop—he winked at Agnel—with the heresy I can't get out of my head that animals most obviously have souls, but unfallen ones, as they did not participate in the sinful pride of our common parents. Ancient man must have been in some measure envious of the animal, suspecting its superiority.

—He was right, of course, he added.

A MAN IN BLUE overalls had come up behind them.

—Ramón! Ravidat called out.

It was Ramón's grease gun that had first illumined the cave. But he was signalling that he did not wish to be called to. He sat under a tree some metres away and lit his pipe. He winked at Ravidat and made himself comfortable.

—Abbé, are we going down again today?

—I think not, Thaon. I should rest my eye. It's full of lights again. Will the boys keep their guard?

—You couldn't drive them away, Monsieur Laval said. They're well set up in their camp. *Pour eux, c'est une aventure.*

—For us all, the Abbé smiled. We shall be at the Hôtel Commerce, he said to the boys, tweaking Agnel's ear and Estreguil's nose.

He shook hands with Ravidat, acknowledging his age and responsibility. His eyes indicated Ramón under the tree.

—Let no one into the cave, he said.

—That's an old friend, Ravidat explained. He is the mechanic in Montignac.

—*Tiens. Jusqu'à demain.*

As the Citroën bounced down the hill, Monsieur Laval on the runningboard, the Abbé Breuil waving his handkerchief from a window, Ramón walked toward them, his hands in his pockets.

—Madame Marsal, he said, will be sending up hot soup.

He approached Ravidat with a look that was both intimate and inquisitive.

—Is it a big cave?

—It's a right good size, yes.

Ramón looked about him. He indicated with his eyes that

he wanted a word apart. Ravidat followed him.

—Wait, Ramón said. *Marsal aussi.*

He put the flat of his hand out to the others. Then he stared at Coencas, who was looking at them from under his cowlick.

—You too, Ramón said. Come with us.

Queroy, Agnel, and Estreguil drew together, left out of a conspiracy.

—Why can't they come? Coencas asked.

Ramón's face showed that Coencas had jeopardized his own eligibility.

—What's it all about? Coencas was persistent.

Ramón saw his mistake. All or none, however dangerous that seemed. He stood in his indecision, pulling his nose.

—*Igual*, he said. Gather around.

He squatted, taking cigarette paper and a sack of tobacco from his pockets.

—This is a matter for *cojones*, he said in a low voice. The priest will be through looking at the pictures in the cave in a few days. That's to be seen. I shall talk with him, too. And with the others. They're all French.

He sealed the cigarette with the tip of his tongue.

—The Germans are not here yet.

He looked at each of them in turn.

—They will be, in time. There are some of us who will be ready. Do you understand?

—I think I see, Ravidat said.

—We call ourselves the *Résistance*. We are all over France. Have you heard about us, Ravidat? No? Well, you have now. You and Marsal own guns. And you know your way about.

—You are a refugee, *hein?* he said to Coencas.

—From Charleville.

—And you and you, Ramón said to Estreguil and Agnel.

—They're old enough to understand, Ravidat said.

—I want you to swear, Ramón said. One hand on your balls, one on your heart. Swear!

—So help us God.

Ramón looked over his shoulder. It was only Robot jumping at a cricket. They sat quietly, listening to the trill of the night-ingales and the wash of wind in the trees.

—The important thing at the moment, Ramón said, is a place to stash ammo. I can get straight off a consignment of Bren guns, if I can find a place to hide them. Is that cave big enough?

—You can hide anything in it, Ravidat said. It's as big as a castle down there.

—If you tell the priest, Coencas said, he won't let you. He'll be afraid you'll hurt the pictures.

—*Foutre les tableaux*, Ramón said. We won't tell him, then. We'll wait until he clears out.

—He's already said, Marsal put in, that he wants to keep the cave secret. That fits in. His secret and our secret will work out the same.

—Anybody who lets our secret out, Ramón said quietly, will have to answer to the *Résistance*. And we are many.

—When do we start? Coencas asked.

—I'll tell you when the time comes. The priest will be measuring the cave. Remember his figures. And tell me all his plans. When he's gone, we can begin to move.

He stood up.

—I'm going back down to the village.

He scooped Agnel up under the arms and held him above his head.

—You know about the Germans? he said. The war? If you tell anybody about this, we lose the war. If you don't, we win.

He set him down.

That goes for you too, he said to Estreguil, crooking his finger as if on a trigger.

—For all of us.

He set off, as casually as he came.

—*Ravidat*, he said, turning, *vous avez la plus longue verge. Soyez le capitaine de ces voyous!*

—*Nous sommes soldats!* Queroy said.

—*Agents, au moins*, Ravidat said.

—*Des espions!*

The moon when it rose was red and perfectly round. Robot gave it a perfunctory trombone howl, joined by Agnel, answered by an owl.

Queroy hinted that Marsal was afraid to be in the *Résistance*, that his mother wouldn't let him if she knew, and got his lip

split in a pinwheel of a fight by the fire. Ravidat parted them with slaps and made them shake hands.

Estreguil fell asleep in his clothes beside Robot, who slept facing the fire.

Coencas standing in the red light pulled off his shorts and studied his dick:

—Mine's the next longest, he said to Ravidat.

—Mine is, Marsal said, crawling back out of his bedroll.

—No, Ravidat said. Robot, I think, is next in rank.

NEXT MORNING they found the figure of the hunter in the shaft at the back of the cave, a mere stick of a man, bird-headed, ithyphallic, childish. Beside him is a carved bird on a staff. His spear has gored a bison, whose bowels are spilling out. To the left of the hunter is a rhinoceros.



THESE SIGNS, Thaon! *What* do they mean? These quartered squares on legs, are they houses on piles, as in the Swiss lake wattle houses, houses perhaps for souls? Are those feather shapes arrows, spears?

—Your *houses*, l'Abbé Bouysonnie said, have four legs. Could not they too be horses? Written horses beside the drawn horses?

WE'VE GOT ONTO a wall of cats. Mountain lions, probably. One old tom has his tail up, testicles well drawn, spraying his territorial boundaries.

—The artist, Abbé Breuil added, has observed the whiplash curve you get in a stream of water coming from a shaking source. We have all seen a cat wiggle his behind when he's peeing.

Another cat has an arrow in its side, like the Sumerian lioness. These are engraved, not painted like the larger beasts.

OUTSIDE, OVER coffee, Abbé Breuil talked about the hunter, the disemboweled bison, and the rhinoceros.

—The rhinoceros trotting off to the left is in heat, you can tell that from her arched tail, even if you've only seen a cow or a cat ready for the male. It was the realism of the *chat qui pisse* that led me to see that. The rhythmic dots drawn under her tail are her delicious odor, I should think. She is ready to breed.

—To the Aurignacian hunter she is ready to die. Except that it is not death he brings with his spear. It is mating in another sense. Nor does this picture mean that she is to die while in heat. It means that in the painter's vocabulary of symbols to die by the spear and to receive the male are cognate female verbs.

—Reality is a fabric of many transparent films. That is the only way we can perceive anything. We think it up. Reality touches our intuition to the quick. We perceive *with* that intuition. Perhaps we perceive the intuition only, while reality remains forever beyond our grasp.

—Man is the javelin bearer, the penis bearer. Woman conceives through a wound that bleeds every lunar cycle, except when she holds the gift of the child, magically healed. The

hieroglyphs of these cave painters for wound and vulva are probably the same.

Monsieur Thaon frowned.

—The hunter with arms outspread before the wounded bison is embracing the idea of death, which to him is the continuity of life. The spilling entrails are an ideogram of the vagina. The bison is life under the guise of death. Who knows what metamorphosis death was to these archaic minds?

—The hunter wears a bird mask exactly like the bird on his shaman's baton. He is therefore not a picture of a man but of that intuitive film over reality we call myth. He has assumed the character that the bird totem also represents. Together they have brought the bison down.

THE TERRACE OF the Hôtel Commerce, *cèpes paysannes*, Laval, Thaon, Breuil, Bouysonnie, *truite meunière*. Ravidat is in a chair apart, his fingers laced together. Coencas, slapping his beret on his thigh, has just come in.

—I was at Altamira, bless you, in the year 1902! the Abbé was saying. Eh! *It* was discovered by a dog, too. It was, it was! I have just now remembered the coincidence. It must have been Robot's Spanish grandfather.

—The cave, but not the paintings, which were discovered by a little girl. Her father, the owner of the property, had been going out to the cave for years, once his dog had found it, but he was looking for celts and flints. He had never once looked at the ceiling, if you can imagine. One day his little daughter came along with him, and walked in and looked up, first thing. *Papa*, she said, *los toros, los toros!*

—Cartailhac was convinced that those bulls were thousands and thousands of years old. I went down with him and began making drawings of them. I've been in the business ever since.

—One day at Altamira I was on my back drawing. They hadn't yet lowered the floor as they have now. I was working with crayons by candlelight, dabbed all over with dripping wax, drawing the great mural of bulls, when a very large-eyed young Spaniard came in on hands and knees. He had come from Barcelona, and his clothes were, I remember, of the Bohemian cut as

they said in those days.

The Abbé's eyes became mischievous and knowing.

—He said *bon jour* and I said *bon jour*, odd as it was, *vous savez*, to be of a civility deep in a Magdalenian cave. And *bon jour* was precisely all the French he had. He lay on his back, looking, looking. *Hermoso*, he kept saying, *hermoso*. He was not interested in the age of the drawings, but, *ma foi*, in their beauty. He asked, as best I understood his Spanish, if he might touch them, and I explained that pigments that had adhered to limestone for twenty thousand years weren't likely to rub off now. But he didn't touch them. He took one of my candles and followed the bold lines of the beasts as if *he* were drawing them. There was a terrible look on his face, wonder and admiration, and a kind of worship.

—I got his name straight once we were outside. Picasso. It meant nothing to me then, of course. Such eyes.

—*Picasso*. He did not forget Altamira. His eye has never forgotten anything. The bison at Altamira were to him *très moderne*. I have always thought of him as a Cromagnon painter out of time.

—The painted caves in Spain are in the north, in the Cantabrian mountains. They are all across, from San Román in the west to Santimamiñe in the east, and this last is outside Guernica where the divebombers struck first in this awful war.

—And when Picasso painted his great symbolic picture of the bombing of Guernica, he made one of the bulls of Altamira dominate the design.

—But yes! said Abbé Bouysonnie. And I had never seen that at all.

—I like to think of that bull, whether at Altamira or in the angry and eloquent *Guernica*, as Being itself, in all its power and dumb presence.

And as if he suddenly found it more comfortable to change the subject, the Abbé Breuil turned to Monsieur Laval:

—What a beautiful old tree! he said of the Montignac beech that filled the *place* with its shade. They are cutting them down, you know, all over France, an obstruction to artillery sighting. A village without a tree is like a woman without hair. Some poet must write an elegy for the trees of the French villages,

may, for the trees of Europe. There was a venerable oak at Guernica, wasn't there? Some great pagan tree that burned when the divebombers came. I keep coming back, it seems, to Picasso.

—But, Bouysonnie said, Picasso does not allude to the Basque oak in his mural, does he?

—No, no, Breuil said. It is not in the prehistoric genius to depict trees. This man Picasso is a painter from the Reindeer Age. The *Guernica* with its wounded horse, its hieratic bull, its placing of images over images, is a prehistoric painting. It honors and grieves and stands in awe. I have copied hundreds and hundreds of these beasts until they file through my dreams. God will take me to them when I die, to the saucy Shetland tarpans whose jet manes run the length of their backs, to the long red ox and woolly rhinoceros. But perhaps the *Guernica* I see is not the one everybody sees. The painting I see is as old as Lascaux.

THE DRACHENBERG BEARS, their jaws full of shadow: *We are Ursus, companions of the Pole Star, god of the Finnmark, brothers of Artemis Diktyнна, lords of the forest. We are Bruin, Arkturus, Baloo. We are eaters of the honey of the bees of Han, the golden bees of Mykinai and Tiryns, the red bees of the Merovingians. Man with his gods fire and flint drove us from the caves but put our souls on the walls along with blind bison, shrill horse, slow cow, royal salmon, wizard elk, cruel puma, idiot jackal.*

IN THE FORECOURT of the chthonic granary of souls at Lascaux two long cows shamble toward three long cows, dewlapped Indus horned cattle lowing and prancing on stiff forelegs. They are not domestic and pied but wild and brown, still in their eland grazing age. Nor are these aurochs yet Hathor nor the royal herds of Harappa. They are, bulls and cows together, female to the Magdalenian mind, creatures of the realm of woman. So were bison, ox, and mammoth. The male domain was horse, ibex, stag.

Breuil leaned on his geologist's pick and gazed.

The bison transfixed by the hunter's spear at the back of the cave is new to us. In a kind of visual pun the spear is drawn from the sexual parts downward and emerges along the bison's belly like a penis in a ventral foreskin. Men have read languages before now without a dictionary.

How could he decipher what men had forgotten twenty thousand years ago?

His eye hurt. He was old. This place was holy. To know, to know.

—*No, Breuil*, he said to himself aloud. *To see.*

ROBOT ON his knees, the Abbé sat in the red rain of light that trembled through the shelved leaves of the great tree in the *place*. Ravidat sat at his feet in a seine of leafshadow. Monsieur le Maire in his high collar and the tricolor across his breast rolled the wine in his glass. Agnel and Estreguil stood on each side of Maurice Thaon, whose hands rested on their shoulders.

—You cannot imagine Africa, the Abbé was saying. Djibouti in the Somaliland, on the gulf of Aden, Nizan, is it not, who calls Aden the worst place in the world? Djibouti, then, is the next worst place. Admiral Scott, you remember, when he first saw Antarctica, said, *Mon Dieu! What an awful place!* and I wish I could have said something as fine about Djibouti but I was speechless.

The Mayor looked from Thaon to a concierge in black stockings who was standing at a respectable distance from the men. He nodded with deep appreciation of the Abbé's words.

—You have lived all your life in France, *mes gosses, messieurs et dames*.

He, too, nodded politely to the concierge, who dared not acknowledge the honor except by folding her arms.

—The Somaliland is a baked waste. My American friend Monsieur Kelley once said that France smells of wine, urine, and garlic, but Africa smells of carrion, of *merde* ripened by flies as big as hornets, of rotten water silver with filth and green with contagion.

—Indeed, said the Mayor.

—Djibouti is ravaged dirt streets, shacks with blinding tin

roofs, whole buildings of rust and packing cases wired together.

—*Il est poète*, the Mayor whispered to Thaon, *l'Abbé!*

—And all of this steaming rot is surrounded by white mountains, sparkling mountains of salt. Imagine that. I was there with Père Teilhard de Chardin, as in China, and with an extraordinary man, a Catalan with an almost French name, Henri de Monfreid, from the Roussillon, the half-brother of Madame Agnès Huc de Monfreid. Their father fell out of a tree some twenty years ago, strange way to die. He was Georges-Daniel de Monfreid, a painter and friend of Gauguin, whose paintings he used to buy under the pretense of selling them, to encourage him.

Maurice Thaon was laughing.

—Since when is a priest not a gossip? the Abbé asked. I'm putting everybody to sleep.

Monsieur Thaon laughed the louder. The Mayor was confused but smiled nevertheless, rolled the wine in his glass, and leaned forward attentively.

—*Et alors*. Where was I? The salt heaps of Djibouti. The stink of Africa. *Ah!* That extraordinary man Henri de Monfreid. He has been everywhere, everywhere that other people haven't been. He was the man who took Père Teilhard to Abyssinia, its awful deserts. Harar, where Rimbaud lived, Obok, Diredawa, Tajura. Prehistory is very rich around there. They found rock paintings, lovely graceful animals, hunters with bows, geometric designs all dots and angles.

Marsal came closer, sitting behind Ravidat.

—I went with them a bit later, like going to the moon. At Obok there is nothing alive. The old volcanoes are still in the week of creation, black and wrinkled. The silence lifts the hair on the back of your head.

—And then we got to Ganda-Biftu, where there are four-hundred metres of paleolithic drawings across the face of a cliff. We climbed up, having built a scaffold for the purpose. I drew and drew and drew, as high up on the rock as the third story of a building. Sickie-horned African buffalo, lions, antelope. And lithe men, far more realistically drawn than in our European caves. And among the buffalo, quite clearly, were long black oxen. You see what that implies. Domestication.

The Abbé stared before him, sipping his wine.

—We found more pictures, found them at Diredawa, and then outside Harar. We went to the Porcupine Cave, as they have named it, that Teilhard had seen earlier. But I saw something he had passed over. It was a calcined protuberance, wonderfully suspicious, and with no trouble at all I found a bone beneath. A human jawbone, but not of man as we know him, but of the breed of men before us, the apelike man Neanderthal. He had never been found in Africa before, and it was not known that he was an artist. It was thought that he could only arrange stones painted red ochre, and set the mountain bears' skulls on ledges as in the cave at Drachenberg.

He drained his glass and set it on the table.

—But he could draw. *Mon Dieu*, he could draw.

THE FIRST boxes of ammunition were placed in the Shaft of The Hunter and the Bison late in October, when the moon was dark. Long cases of carbines packed in grease, grenades, flares, .45s rose in neat stacks to the black shins of the prancing horses.

AT DRACHENBERG the bears' skulls sat on their ledges, hooded in dust older than *Ur* or *Dilmun*. Their muzzles all pointed to the rising sun, which fell upon them dimly in the depth of their cave in the cliff, lighting all but the sockets of their eyes.

Historical Note

The cave at Lascaux, on the estate of the Rochefoucaulds near Montignac in the Dordogne, was painted between 20,000 and 15,000 B.C. by men about whom we know nothing except that they hunted with arrowheads shaped like laurel leaves and were draughtsmen as accomplished as Hokusai and Carpaccio. The passage by which they entered the cave has never been discovered, but it is evident that they worked in darkness by torchlight. The animals they depicted all belonged to species now extinct. The outlines of the figures were engraved or brushed, and the pigment sprayed on.

Sealed for two hundred centuries, the cave was discovered on September 12, 1940, first by a rabbit, and immediately afterward by a dog named Robot, who was chasing it. Robot belonged to a boy from Montignac named Ravidat. Jacques Marsal, who was with Ravidat and Robot, is now a guide at Lascaux, though he only shows slides rather than leading visitors through the cave, which has been closed for over a decade and is expected to be closed indefinitely. The warmth of human breath had caused bacterial cultures to grow on the paintings.

M. André Leroi-Gourhan, whose work on the European prehistoric caves is the most brilliant and searching since that of the greatest of prehistorians, Abbé Henri Breuil (1877-1961), says in his monumental *Treasures of Prehistoric Art* that Lascaux "was discovered in 1940, quite accidentally, by two local boys, Ravidat and Marsal." Mlle. Annette Laming (now Mme. Laming-Emperaire) attributes the discovery to four boys. "Two of the boys," she says in her *Lascaux: Paintings and Engravings*, "Ravidat and Marsal, are natives of the Commune [Montignac in Périgord] and subsequently became guides to the cave—indeed they still fill this office. The third, Agnel, was on holiday in Montignac, and the fourth, Coencas, was a refugee there."

Mr. Glyn Daniel recognizes five discoverers, and is the sole historian of archeology to have recorded Robot's name. "On the morning of September 12, 1940," he says in his *Lascaux and Carnac*, "when the Battle of Britain was being fought out and France itself was divided into an occupied and unoccupied zone by a line that ran from Bordeaux north-east to Burgundy, five young men from Montignac went out rabbit-shooting. They were Ravidat, Marsal, Queroy, Coencas, and Estreguil. Ravidat, Marsal, and Queroy were local boys; the other two were refugees from occupied France. Ravidat, aged seventeen at the time, was the oldest of the five and the leader of the party. They had with them two guns and a dog—a famous dog to whom archeologists should erect a statue—the little dog Robot."

That Lascaux was used as a secret ammunition cache by the Résistance is recorded in André Malraux's *Anti-Memoirs*. The presence of

Picasso at Altamira with the Abbé Breuil is affirmed by Alan Houghton Broderick's *Father of Prehistory: The Abbé Henri Breuil, His Life and Times*. The resemblance between the *Guernica* and the Sanctuary of the Bulls at Altamira is a perception which I assume occurred to Père Breuil. Other perceptions of the great prehistorian are actually ideas later worked out by M. Leroi-Gourhan, and some of them, such as the theory that the red dots at the rumps of the tarpans are graphs of sexual odor, are imaginary.

My story is an *assemblage* of facts insofar as they can be known. All the characters are real, including the Spanish mechanic, and the time scheme is as I have used it. The discovery of Lascaux was a pattern of coincidences which no professional story-teller would ask any reader to believe. It is slightly preposterous that the greatest living authority on prehistoric art was only a few miles away at the time of the discovery, though it is not surprising that schoolboys should be learned in the subject of painted prehistoric caves, as the region roundabout is rich in them, and their history teacher was an ardent amateur prehistorian.

M. Jacques Marsal told Daniel M. Madden in 1969 that he "and three other boys" discovered Lascaux [*New York Times*, 4 January 1970, "France Saves Lascaux Grotto, But Public Is Still Barred"]. The number of co-discoverers fell to two when M. Marsal talked with André Malraux earlier. Ravidat became a contractor, but holds with Marsal the honor of being an official guardian of the cave. The fortunes of Coencas, Estreguil, and Agnel I have failed to ascertain. Queroy was killed in the Résistance.

KEVIN KLEIN

Harlem: November, 1971

'ole hard luck marks the walls"
—written at a construction site on 135th Street

The graph of the city tearing itself apart
The sun aiming grief at every tenement window
Life here is thrown open in broad daylight
like a highway accident that radiates and blinds traffic.

At night, it is cool drives to the river,
jazz illuminating the inside of a car,
a woman in bed with her man
suddenly feeling the power of her skin
and sustaining the force of his coming.

In a dimly-lit hallway,
a woman is trying to locate her future
by following cracks in the wall with her hand.
The palm passes over the branched-out lines
dictating: there is nothing here but a map to your city.
Old hard luck marks the walls.

And at the same time, a mother living at the edge of town,
stands on the curb,
is waving her arms to gather the children
the sun going down
the cross on her steeple
the breath of her man as he comes home
the misery of nowhere to go
choosing members for a gangwar
in an alley around the corner
the funeral procession walking through the streetmarket
her jazz, her country, her tribe,
her face when it is whitened for a second by summer lightning
the way she has finally walked to this curb
the way she is about to beautifully, honestly
break the law.

When Learning is an Emergency

*for my sister, six-years-old, who is already at
the point where she has to write things down*

When a fierce stranger
pressed his world against your small schoolyard
and struck down your friends:
a new way of learning happened;
something inside broke loose
and pulled you into the future for a second
to meet this vision as though you'd seen it before
and understood what to do.

Well, it's over now, and you're safe
with two brothers who know
that what happened, still struggles in you
for the way out and the night.
So we'll read you stories, trying to ease you back
across that terrible testing ground
and into your childhood again.

O it is fear that holds us together tonight;
fear of what we are going through
fear of how deep events can lie in us
fear in knowing that the men who are ruthless
are the men we care about and take into our homes.

Labor Poem

for Lauri, who knows the whole story

You have told me how you use your strength
how you are in love, cleaning your man's apartment
collecting the afternoon light on a wet cloth
being taken alive by a room you've never lived in

and I think of the poem as trying to find the language
it takes to put your whole body into something
to struggle with the actual world in the actual world
to at least receive the physical impulses from what you're
doing

I think of a woman as a poet
when she is on her hands and knees scrubbing a floor
looking after her man taking her rest in a clean room
using the whole day to wash off a year's dirt
pressing her tired hand against her forehead
as if to say: well, it's been a life.

Following the Lone Star

for my mother, and for David, my father

In your whole life,
I see the summer before I was born,
when you were stranded in Texas, eating eggs and drink-
ing cheap liquor
because you were short on cash.
You were long on love though
with David in the Air Force flying down to you
thinking of your body when he touched the state
thinking of your loneliness when he saw a little light
flickering at the end of the runway
thinking: air force, when his breath found "I love you"
in the dark, dry house.

I think of you on a blazing afternoon
driving across that flat, lonely star state together;
driving to simply break clean—
a flight plan, a way of getting back to earth.

Just Now

When a streetlight far off
suddenly steadies my vision
I see myself sitting on the porch
of an old farm, talking to the neighbors
about the work and the weather in our lives.
A mother holding her baby
and looking deep into the state
says, "Our lives are clearest now."
We believe the night here
sometimes moves slower to accommodate us.

Come out someday
There is more light in us
than any street's could give.
We trust our feeling for you.
We find your sure distance, and it is home, with us.
It's an easy country to follow friend
regardless of how hard it can be to get here.
We say grow tall to steady things.
Try for a simple language.
Be easy.
Touch us with your vision. Send us your message.

B. H. HAGGIN

Music and Ballet Chronicle

THE VARIOUS HAPPENINGS LAST YEAR in celebration of Virgil Thomson's seventh-fifth birthday ended with the Juilliard School's production of his new opera, *Lord Byron*. I had looked forward to another work in which Thomson would use his idiosyncratic method as attentively and freshly and effectively as in his earlier *The Mother of Us All*; but the very few good passages I heard in *Lord Byron*—among them some phrases sung early in the second scene by Thomas Moore and Augusta Leigh, and the final piece sung by the shades of the poets—which confirmed my recollection of the high quality of *The Mother of Us All*, also removed doubt concerning what I heard in most of the new opera: vocal writing that was a mere shapeless doodling of notes to carry the words to which it had no expressive relation; frequent bizarre-sounding orchestral contrivance with no relation to what was being sung; excruciatingly discordant choral writing with no precedent in Thomson's earlier operas that I could recall, and no reason I could discover for it in this one. Those few good passages also made it clear that the poor quality of the rest of the music couldn't be explained by the feebleness of Jack Larson's libretto, but had to be taken as representing the present state of Thomson's musical powers. Among these powers one must include the judgment that produced the choice—as the vocal medium of the work's darkly passionate protagonist—of a high light tenor voice, employed much of the time in its cruelly taxing highest range. I think Grayson Hirst was unwise to sing in a work that imposed this strain on his beautiful voice; and I would say the same of Carolyn Val-Schmidt, whose impressive soprano voice was similarly misused at times in the writing for Mrs. Leigh. Lenus Carlson (Moore) and Lynne Wickenden (Lady Byron) were the other outstanding singers; and the musical performance I heard was conducted effectively by Gerhard Samuel, except for the momentary breakdown at a dramatic high point in Act 3. The stage performance directed adequately by John Houseman had unimpressive sets by David Mitchell and remarkably unattractive costumes for the women by Patricia Zipprodt. And Alvin Ailey's choreographic evocation of Byron's dissolute life abroad, a danced interlude, was ludicrous.

One would have thought that Zeffirelli's spectacular and costly fiasco with Samuel Barber's *Antony and Cleopatra* would have ended his activity at the Metropolitan. But Mr. Bing's parting gift, to remind us of him for years after his departure, was a new staging of Verdi's *Otello* by Zeffirelli, with his sets and Peter Hall's costumes,

which confirmed yet again the conclusion I have come to after many years' observation (and referred to by now as Haggin's Law)—that you can't keep a bad man down. Unlike Eugene Berman, the great designer of the beautiful sets of the Metropolitan's 1963 *Otello*, Zeffirelli decided the time had come for him to replace the ideas and decisions of Boito and Verdi with new ones of his own; and the results were ugly sets and stage action which at times obscured the essential dramatic point and at other times introduced points thought up by Zeffirelli that would have outraged Boito and Verdi. The musical performance gained by the fresh and beautiful voices which Teresa Zylis-Gara, the Desdemona, and Sherrill Milnes, the Iago, used in well-shaped and expressive phrases; but *Otello's* part calls for a free outpouring of powerful tenor sound which James McCracken's curiously constricted-sounding voice cannot produce; and his opening "*Esultate!*" was reduced in volume and impact by Zeffirelli's innovation of having *Otello's* ship appear at the back of the stage and *Otello* sing from its deck, instead of his entering after landing, as the score directs, and singing from the front of the stage. A major point of interest was Böhm's conducting of the work—his first Italian opera at the Metropolitan, though he had conducted the Italian repertory in German Europe. His first act was swept along by the sheer momentum of the musical progression from first note to last; but in the later acts in which continuity of tension and flow must be maintained by the conductor there were occasional slackness and discontinuity. And not only did the orchestra not sound as well as it had sounded in *Pelléas et Mélisande*, but the Verdi *tuttis* didn't reach me at the back of the theater as the occasional Debussy splendors had done; from which I had to conclude that Böhm didn't have Colin Davis's ability to achieve the balance in an orchestra that is necessary for beautiful sound and big sonority.

Otello, it is good to know, will be conducted this season by the remarkably gifted young conductor James Levine, whose engagement as principal conductor for five years is one of the actions of the Metropolitan's new general manager, Goeran Gentele,¹ that promised improvement in the company's operation. Another is his appointment of a musical director, the conductor Rafael Kubelik: it is excellent that musical matters are going to be dealt with by a musician—a musician, moreover, who heartened one with his affirmation, in an interview, of the conductor's supremacy over the stage people in opera production, and also with his decision to use the Musorgsky original in the recent production of *Boris Godunov* in Munich, which seemed to indicate that it would also be heard at the Metropolitan. On the other hand it was appalling to read that the

¹ This chronicle was written before Mr. Gentele's recent tragic death in Sardinia.

new production of *Carmen* staged by Mr. Gentile—who was an actor and stage and film director before he became manager of the Stockholm Opera—would be conducted by Leonard Bernstein, a long-time demonstrator of Haggin's Law; and that the operation of this law would also give us more of Leinsdorf's conducting—of the *Walküre* that initiated the *Ring* cycle designed by Schneider-Siemsen and staged by von Karajan in their abstract bridge-into-the-future style, and the new *Siegfried* continuing that cycle.

Mr. Gentile, talking to a *Times* interviewer about his plan for a Piccolo Met similar to the Piccolo Scala of Milan for small-scale productions of suitable operas, old and new, pointed out how much better it would be for a young composer with no experience in writing opera to begin, and even to fail, with a small-scale work than with one on the scale required by a huge theater like the Metropolitan; and how, on the other hand, the Metropolitan, which had an obligation to do something about contemporary opera, could do it if it involved such a small-scale operation of the Piccolo Met. This was realistic and sensible; but then Mr. Gentile was reported to have said that it was "of the utmost importance to do something to change the image of the Met. We must add a contemporary aspect. We must do our best to attract a young public that does not come to the Met now, and we must do so by offering this public opera of its own time at a price it can pay"—which was not realistic or sensible. There is a young public interested in opera, and a young public that is not interested. The Metropolitan doesn't have to change its image of producer of the operas of Gluck, Mozart, Beethoven, Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini, Verdi and Wagner, among others, to attract the young public that is interested in them: this young public is already there in the standing room and cheaper seats, as it always has been; and no doubt it will also be at the performances of the Piccolo Met. But I find it improbable that the young public which does *not* come to the Metropolitan because it is *not* interested in the great operas of the past will be drawn to the Piccolo Met by an interest in the operas of today.

Whenever the question came up whether Stravinsky's published writing in recent years had been written by Stravinsky or by Robert Craft, I said I was sure a man as strong-minded as Stravinsky would want to speak for himself, and though I thought it possible that he would let someone help him in the editing of what he said, I found it inconceivable that he would let his name be attached to what someone else had written. And this continued to be what I thought after the extraordinary *Times* interview last March in which Lillian Libman, who for a number of years had handled the arrangements for Stravinsky's concert appearances, recordings, television programs, published writing and all the rest, talked with Donal Henahan about the book of hers that was to appear in the fall, in

which she claimed that what had appeared as Stravinsky's writing in books and articles had actually been written by Craft. When I characterize the interview as extraordinary I have in mind the fact that *The Times's* normal practice is to review a book *after* it has appeared, not to publish an interview with the author about its contents seven or eight months *before* its publication—which raised the question what, or who, had impelled *The Times* to this unusual action in the case of the Libman book. And when I say my thought about the authorship of Stravinsky's writing was not changed by the interview it is because of the statements by Mrs. Stravinsky and Craft reported in *The Times* a few days later:

Mrs. Stravinsky says that the authenticity of the Stravinsky-Craft books . . . is indisputable. She says that for years she saw the two men working together. . . . Mr. Craft went into further detail about the collaboration. ". . . Stravinsky would talk and I would write down exactly what he said. Later I would face him with his words, and he would throw out a lot. Finally we would decide on a finished version . . ."

Craft, that is, described as fact what I had thought possible—that he had merely helped Stravinsky in the editing of what he said for publication.

The question raised by the interview was raised again by the article of Mr. Henahan which *The Times* published in May on its Sunday music page. Mr. Henahan referred to the original accusation, in the interview, by "Lillian Libman, a close business and personal associate of [Stravinsky] in his last decade," and said that Craft, in his counterattack on Miss Libman in *The New York Review of Books*, had "evade[d] any mention of the authorship issue," and thus had not "address[ed] himself to the only real point raised"—that what readers had believed were Stravinsky's words had actually been Craft's. Then Mr. Henahan went on to buttress the Libman accusation with descriptions of published deceptions by Craft—in particular his account in *The Times* of Stravinsky's behavior in his hotel in Strasbourg, which turned out to have been written in advance of a visit to that city that had been cancelled, and which Craft later published in *Retrospectives and Conclusions* as an account of Stravinsky's behavior in his hotel in Paris.

One wondered again what was behind this further attack on Stravinsky through Craft in *The Times*²—in addition to perceiving

² Was it Stravinsky's letter to *The Times* shortly before his death, with its opening statement, "Clive Barnes's 'This Firebird Is For Burning' adds several cubits to the stature of his incompetence as a commentator on ballet," followed by an annihilating amplification of this statement about the man whom *The Times* presented as qualified to speak in its name on ballet? Or was it what Bernard Shaw had said—that editors who knew enough to be strict about what was printed in

that what Mr. Henahan revealed about Craft did not in fact have any bearing on "the only real point" raised by the Libman interview, which was the authenticity of what appeared under Stravinsky's byline. It was this authenticity of *his* published writing that Miss Libman had attacked with what she had claimed was the authoritative knowledge of "a close business and personal associate of the composer"; and Mr. Henahan evaded any mention of the fact that Craft's counterattack in *The New York Review* was a convincing demonstration that her relation to Stravinsky had been less close, and she was a less authoritatively knowledgeable and reliable witness, than she had claimed. Mr. Henahan also chose to ignore the fact that Craft, who had already addressed himself to "the only real point" in the *Times* statement I quoted earlier, did address himself to it again in *The New York Review*:

What Miss Libman appears not to have been aware of is that Stravinsky's and my joint journalism was the result of hundreds of hours of, above all, listening to music, and of the most painstaking piecing together, on my part, of his thoughts and reactions.

Moreover, his two statements about how Stravinsky's published writing was produced are confirmed by what one actually reads not only in the earlier autobiographical Stravinsky-Craft books but in the Stravinsky articles on Gesualdo's music and Beethoven's last quartets reprinted in *Retrospectives and Conclusions*, and the comments on Debussy's *Pelléas* and Boulez's recorded performance of it in Stravinsky's last article before his death. That is, even in those late and last articles the ideas cannot be anyone's but Stravinsky's; and Craft still can be only their transcriber, even though, as he put it in *The Times*, "Toward the end the words were more mine than his, but he approved." It is, then, always Stravinsky who is speaking under his byline, whether in the words of his own that Craft helped him to decide on in the earlier books, or in the words he approved that were more Craft's than his, toward the end. And this is not changed by anything Craft did under his own byline (concerning which Mrs. Stravinsky informed *The Times* that Craft's description of Stravinsky's behavior in the Strasbourg hotel was "that of our earlier visit there," but also that it was the description of Stravinsky's routine in every hotel).

Though the National Ballet of Washington featured its new productions of *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Cinderella* during its week

news reports and political articles would, in their ignorance of music, allow their music critics to indulge in "every conceivable blunder and misdemeanor that a journalist can commit," which in *The Times* included the arrogant and vulgar personal offensiveness of Harold Schonberg to Glenn Gould a few years ago, and now the blithely irresponsible nastiness of Mr. Henahan's dealing with Stravinsky?

at New York's City Center, I saw first its program of several short pieces. The opening *Les Sylphides* was made unmagical by the set, the lighting, the dancing of the soloists—including Gaye Fulton in the Prelude and the *pas de deux* to the C-sharp minor Waltz—and even the context provided by the *corps*. In the *Don Quixote pas de deux* that followed, Marilyn Burr's excessively pointed-up Spanish style and the worse excesses of the strutting Luis Fuente produced a laughable caricature. Fuente was obtrusive even in Dolin's *Variations for Four*, in which Stewart Sebastian's dancing held one's attention with its clarity and finish. Ben Stevenson's *Three Preludes*, to piano pieces by Rachmaninov, offered fluent and effective classical ballet invention which was danced with precision, grace and brilliance by Jane Miller and Dennis Poole. And Jack Carter's *The Witchboy* I found uninteresting except for the ensemble folk dancing in the last scene. Its title role was danced well by Kirk Petersen; and Frederic Franklin contributed one of his arresting character performances as the fanatical Preacher.

Stevenson's staging of *The Sleeping Beauty* turned out to be very good, and was excellently performed. Though Gaye Fulton wasn't able to make a few difficult moments look easy, her dancing in the title role was at other times impressive, and her acting effective. The Prince was a German guest, Peter Breuer, handsome and accomplished, who danced with elegance and brilliance and partnered Fulton well in their *pas de deux*. And the Bluebird was Luis Fuente, who spoiled his technically brilliant performance with his obtrusively italicizing mannerisms. Stevenson's staging of *Cinderella* also was very good and excellently performed, with Fulton achieving what I thought was her best performance in the title role, Breuer again fine as the Prince, and Franklin amusing as one of the Ugly Sisters.

The City Center Joffrey Ballet provided an opportunity to see again the beautiful dance invention of Balanchine's *Square Dance*, executed admirably by Francesca Corkle, Paul Sutherland and the others, but marred again by the appalling words of the Caller that Balanchine evidently still insists on. With it I saw again the charming Bournonville *Konservatoriet* that the Royal Danish Ballet introduced years ago, which was performed beautifully by Charthel Arthur, Pamela Johnson, Paul Sutherland and their associates.

As for the New York City Ballet's spring season, its major event was a week-long Stravinsky Festival, conceived—Balanchine was reported to have said at a news conference—as a celebration, an homage, in the form of a retrospective of Stravinsky's music in chronological order: "We want to show Stravinsky's existence through the sound." I took this to mean what Balanchine said to me during a chance encounter—that the festival was planned to show Stravinsky's entire life as a composer in the progression of works; and that for this it would include seldom-heard early pieces like the Symphony No. 1

and even, if it could be obtained, a piano sonata Stravinsky wrote as a child. And I couldn't imagine the mental process by which Balanchine had arrived at the decision that a demonstration in Stravinsky's music of his entire life as a composer required the inclusion of his inconsequential juvenilia but not of the first monumental products of his matured powers—*Petrushka* and *Le Sacre du Printemps*. Or the decision to include—in addition to the later outstanding *Pulcinella* and *Apollo*—the less consequential *Chant du Rossignol*, *Octuor*, *Serenade in A*, the extremely unattractive Piano Concerto, but not the toweringly great *Le Baiser de la Fée* (the complete ballet score, not the abridgment for concert performance titled *Divertimento*). Or the decision to include, with the still later charming *Danses Concertantes* and impressive *Orpheus*, the unattractive Violin Concerto, Duo Concertant and Symphony in Three Movements, but not the delightful *Jeu de Cartes*.

In this matter I felt most strongly about the omission of *Le Baiser de la Fée*. *Petrushka* and *Le Sacre* are performed frequently; but I can recall no concert performance in New York of the entire score of *Le Baiser*, and only one or two performances of the portion of it that Stravinsky made into a concert piece with the title *Divertimento*; and so the concert public is unaware that *Le Baiser* is the one later orchestral work of Stravinsky with a magnitude of scale and content which is comparable with that of *Petrushka* and *Le Sacre*, though achieved in a different way. It doesn't have the originality that is overwhelming in the other two; it is in fact one of the works that unperceptive critics have called imitations of other composers—the works in which Stravinsky found it interesting to have his mind operate with the thematic substance and style of this or that composer of the past, as Beethoven did with Mozart and Brahms with Haydn. But in *Le Baiser* Stravinsky's reworking of fragments of Tchaikovsky's piano pieces and songs, in contexts of his own invention in styles that are his extensions of Tchaikovsky's style, produces his most beautifully wrought, most expressive and affecting, most dramatically imaginative writing—writing which in these respects is unlike any one hears in his other major works except *L'Oiseau de Feu*, and which attains the magnitude I mentioned that, in the end, also is overwhelming. I acquired my own awareness of the greatness of *Le Baiser* through hearing it with the ballet that Balanchine made for his first American company in 1937, that was performed later by the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, and that was last performed by the New York City Ballet in 1950-51. It was a wonderfully imagined and powerfully moving dramatic ballet; and I have never understood his decision to drop it and his unwillingness to revive it. When I said this last spring to one of the company's management I was told the reason was its failure in 1950—the reason also for his not reviving his delightful ballet *Jeu de Cartes*. My recollection was that the au-

diences had enjoyed both these ballets; and when I asked Tanaquil LeClercq, who had danced in *Le Baiser*, what *she* remembered, she confirmed that "the audience *did* like both ballets. Not super hits . . . but nice applause, a few 'Bravos' once or twice." But it isn't only the unwillingness to revive the original ballets for *Le Baiser* and *Jeu de Cartes* that is baffling; it is Balanchine's not including the two scores in the festival with new choreographies, as he did *Danses Concertantes* and the Violin Concerto—his omitting *Jeu de Cartes* entirely, and his making a new choreography not for the whole of *Le Baiser* but only for "excerpts from the 'Divertimento' version" that is itself only part of the score.

The celebration—except for a performance of *Fireworks* by Robert Irving with the orchestra and a performance of the songs of *The Faun and the Shepherdess* by Frances Bible and the orchestra—was done with choreographies for the pieces of music, some already in the company's repertory, a greater number made especially for the festival by Balanchine, Jerome Robbins, John Taras, Todd Bolender, John Clifford, Richard Tanner and Lorca Massine. I was able to attend only the first four performances and a couple of dress rehearsals; and in the limited available time I can write only briefly about what I saw. In some instances the choreographic celebration was no more interesting than the music it celebrated—the extreme example of this being the chaos Clifford produced on the stage for Stravinsky's amazingly undisciplined as well as wholly derivative Op. 1, the Symphony in E flat. Taras exhibited experienced competence in what he devised for the Piano Concerto, *Scènes de Ballet* and *Le Chant du Rossignol*, a spectacular with very little dancing, and produced something more excitingly effective with his use of the silhouetted dancers in the special style of *Ebony Concerto*. And competence was exhibited also in the experienced Todd Bolender's piece for Serenade in A, the younger Richard Tanner's for the Octuor. As for the more impressively gifted Robbins and Balanchine, in the columns of *The New York Times* during the preceding year Robbins had been providing the New York City Ballet with the creativity Balanchine had ceased to provide; but that hadn't been what I had seen on the stage of the New York State Theater, and it wasn't what I saw at the festival. The sensation of the opening performance was not the enjoyable *Scherzo Fantastique* that Robbins produced with his limited vocabulary and imagination for classical ballet; it was the *pas de deux* that Balanchine produced for the Aria I of the Violin Concerto—one that continued the series of acrobatic supported adagios of *Agon*, *Episodes* and *Rubies*, but was as astoundingly different from them as they had been from each other, and, like them, held one spellbound with its unending originality and power. And this would have been so if instead of *Scherzo Fantastique* the Robbins piece had been the later *Dumbarton Oaks*, a larger-scale and more

elaborately contrived classical ballet, light in character and pleasant to watch; or, on the other hand, if it had been *Requiem Canticles*, a modern-dance-style piece for dancers in black leotards, whose movements didn't have for me whatever meaning or effect they were intended to have, and whose character can perhaps be conveyed by its ending—with most of the dancers crouched around the three or four who stood motionless with heads thrown back and mouths wide open as the curtain fell. Or even if it had been the delightful *Circus Polka*, performed not by the elephants for which the music was written, but by successive groups of smaller and smaller girls whom Robbins, playing the Ringmaster, marshalled into various arrangements in which they charmed one with their precisely executed ballet movements and poses.

Balanchine followed the supported adagio for the Aria I of the Violin Concerto with another for the Aria II that was only slightly less overwhelming; and though he demonstrated again with these two pieces that his powers operate most impressively in the manipulation of two linked bodies in adagio, he also produced superb invention for the large ensembles of the animated opening Toccata and final Capriccio of the work. In addition he produced for the lilting middle movement of the Symphony in Three Movements that preceded the Violin Concerto a *pas de deux* which was fascinating in its lighter, more open style. And the second evening he offered a masterly and delightful new choreography for *Danses Concertantes*, in which, however, there were not the witty details in Lynda Yourth's dancing that I had seen in 1945 in Danilova's—details suited to the elegantly formed and styled Danilova that wouldn't even occur to Balanchine for the stockier-bodied and cruder-styled Yourth. (That says something important to Balanchine about his rejection of "stars" and preference for malleable young dancers. Danilova, in the rehearsals I observed, was a "star" only in her possession of extraordinary gifts that Balanchine could use to obtain what he cannot obtain from his young dancer today.)

It seemed at first that Balanchine, the next evening, was using the music of the third scene of *Le Baiser de la Fée* for a new classical *pas de deux* which, considered in and for itself, was charming, but which was less satisfying to someone who remembered the playful details of the beginning of the "*grand pas classique*" (as Balanchine referred to it) of the Boy and his Bride in the 1937 ballet, so closely related to the playfulness of the clarinet and flute in the music; the climactic supported *arabesque penché* related to the impassioned melody of the violins; the exquisite conclusion related to the delicate chatter of the woodwinds; the Bride's capricious solo. But Balanchine decided to insert into the new piece the solo for the male dancer that customarily precedes the girl's solo in such pieces; and for this he used music he should not have used—the eerie and violent

music for the *pas de deux* in which the Fairy takes possession of the Boy in the second scene, ending with the little ascending runs of the flute as she points ahead with her right arm and pushes his limp body forward with her left (which can be seen in the photograph in the company's 1972 souvenir brochure). I can't imagine that Stravinsky would approve of this dramatically meaningful music being used for the leaps and spins and other feats of a male dancer's solo in a *grand pas classique*. And it seems to me that Balanchine's dealing with *Le Baiser* constitutes a failure in his obligation to this great work—an obligation which he can fulfil only by performing the entire score with the ballet for which Stravinsky wrote it.

As baffling as Balanchine's dealing with *Le Baiser* was the further revision of *Firebird* that increased the damage done to it by the 1970 revision. His original streamlined version of the ballet for Stravinsky's streamlined 1945 version of the score preserved the essentials of the story in the flame-colored costume of the Firebird, her powerful entrance solo, the *pas de deux* in which she was the struggling captive of the Prince, and her gift to him, when he released her, of the plume with which he later summoned her to his aid. But his first revision two years ago eliminated these essentials; and the further revision for the festival had the Firebird made up to look like the sinister woman who lived down a manhole in Charles Addams's cartoons, and costumed like a Chagall character in white robes with enormous white wings and a bouquet of red roses which she kept transferring from one hand to the other as she made her way, hampered by her robes, through a necessarily unlively entrance solo and a *pas de deux* in which she was more often separated from the Prince than held by him. At the end of the *pas de deux* she gave him not a plume but her bouquet, which later he presented to the Princess; and in his hour of danger, therefore, he had no plume with which to summon the Firebird but she appeared without being summoned. (This *Firebird* Clive Barnes pronounced "much improved"—which revealed again how little his writing has to do with what he professes to be writing about.)

It is one thing to read the fantasizing pronouncements in *The Times*, but quite another thing to read in a printed article on the company by Lincoln Kirstein, issued with the announcement of the plans for the Stravinsky Festival, the unrealistic and—coming from him—astonishing statement: "At the birth of the New York City Ballet some twenty-five years ago, as well as over the last few seasons, Jerome Robbins has occupied a place no less important than Balanchine." One need only look at the company's repertory twenty-five years ago and its repertory of recent seasons to know that what Mr. Kirstein wrote is as untrue about twenty-five years ago as about today. The festival demonstrated again that creative powers of the nature and magnitude of Balanchine's are still not exhibited by anyone else today, including Jerome Robbins.

MARCIA B. SIEGEL

The Candid Art of Time

WE HAVEN'T HAD A GOOD OLD FASHIONED *succès de scandale* in so long, I wonder if anybody cares passionately about art any more. Something is more likely to get booed as a bad investment than as an aesthetic mistake. The closest thing to a scandal in the 1971-72 dance season broke out at the opening of Jerome Robbins' new piece, *Watermill*. The shocker was that *Watermill* had virtually no dancing in it. New York City Ballet star Edward Villella was required to strip to his jockey shorts and spend the rest of the dance as a spectator to a long chain of extremely slow, droning events. There wasn't a pirouette in the package.

Not that these desecrations didn't exist before—anyone with the mildest interest in experimental dance, or even pop ballet or the commercial theater, had certainly been exposed by that time to nudity and non-linear, minimal action—but the dignity of Lincoln Center and its patrons is vast and easily affronted. You don't expect to find these goings-on in this place. Clive Barnes promptly unfurled the Masterpiece bunting over *Watermill's* eager head and the furor subsided, but something still bothers people about the piece. What makes *Watermill* daring, what pushes its viewers beyond the entertaining, pleasantly excited point where they want to go, is also the one element that to me is most characteristic and most interesting about the ballet: its distortion of time.

Dance, of course, is very much *about* time, and we expect ballet to contain fast and slow movement, to stimulate us with abrupt changes or delayed resolutions. As long as it stays within the musical beat and doesn't let either the quickness or slowness get out of proportion, we can accept dancing of near-eccentric timing. Violette Verdy's phrasing—the way she draws out the upbeat in order to pounce on the beat—fascinates us even when it becomes over-emphatic. Edward Villella initiates almost everything with an extremely powerful and quick impulse, often using a lot of busy little motions to get himself going and then slowing down dramatically at the end of the phrase, and these harsh spurts and intakes of energy allow him to jump higher and turn more times than almost any dancer in this country. *Watermill* cheats the audience of all the thrills we get from accelerated or retarded motion on stage. Its time is evenly distributed, slow, monotonous as a ticking clock, and, to many people, frustrating.

Of all the intangible forces of our existence, Americans seem most preoccupied by time. Space contracts or opens out around us

without our noticing. We ignore the weight and tensions of the bodies we live in, and we make ourselves oblivious to all but the most overbearing sounds and smells. But time seems to be always pressuring us with its deadlines and anniversaries. When we're not doing time, we're killing it, or saving it, or making it, or borrowing it, or trying to catch up with it when it gets ahead of us or bring it back when it's gone.

The idea of doing something to time has intrigued choreographers for almost fifty years. Perhaps it was the German expressionists, perhaps it was Martha Graham, anyhow someone decided that time in dance didn't have to be only a matter of speeding up and slowing down depending on the tempo of the music and its permissible rubatos. Theatrical time has never been the same as literal time, and the drama's various devices of narrative condensation and heightening had taken hold early in the history of ballet. But Graham departed radically from these conventions by introducing flashbacks, memories, and the simultaneous visualization of more than one time at a time as a character confronted events of the past—not in a dream but in a “real” action.

In a Graham dance it's not always possible to tell where in time a character is—past, present or future. The narrator figure can be at one moment telling how she feels now, in her old age; at the next moment she may be acting out events in her past. Graham can show a whole war, a love affair, the development of a personality by introducing characters or events consecutively or together that are really spread far apart in time. The fact that some of these characters are real people and some are symbols, that some events are shown as the narrator actually lived them and some are as she imagines them, doesn't make the audience's orientation to time any clearer. However, by deliberately taking her narratives out of time, Graham gave them a quality of universality, a sense of transcending time and so existing for all time.

In Germany Mary Wigman and her disciples were working in non-narrative forms, and were experimenting not only with the actual drawing out or compressing of the time it took to do a movement, but with the subtle effect that other elements like sound, light, or a restructuring of space could have on the feeling of time. Working at the level of sensation and perception, rather than the more artificial, presentational area of consciousness, they could effect a feeling of timelessness by making time go away—by repeating an action, like a trance or dervish dancer, until both performer and viewer became engrossed in the physicality or the emotion of it. They explored how great masses of people in motion could alter the audience's experience of time and space. The fantastic multi-media creations of Alwin Nikolais, applying the time-

and space-changing possibilities of technological devices to dance, are a direct product of this branch of experimentation.

In recent years we've seen people of both the extremely avant-garde and the extremely popular dance using time as a factor perhaps even more important than the movement idiom or narrative content. Instead of being something that's supposed to enhance or vary the look of movement, time can actually convert the movement into another thing, or can impose an entirely different stylistic gestalt on the movement.

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Possibly the most far-out work in all of dance—and at this point the most unadorned with theatrical business—is being done by Stephanie Evanitsky and her Multi-Gravitational Experiment. This group works off the floor, in a trapeze-like arrangement of six inner tubes hung from the ceiling. But they don't swing, balance or do acrobatics in the tubes as you might expect. Carefully keeping their bodies nearly weightless, they move with a slow fluidity as they continuously progress through the tube-sculpture. They change their shapes, transfer their weight to new supports, reach, slither, suspend, mold, make contact with each other.

It doesn't look exciting or dangerous; in fact, it hardly looks like anything at all. But after a long time you begin to see an overwhelming sensuality in this movement; the dancers seem to be pouring themselves through space, wrapping every inch of their bodies around the palpable air. I think it's the slowness that makes you especially aware of their ability to hang in grotesque or unnatural attitudes for the longest time without going dead or posing, the gradual way they change to new configurations, the lingering, melting images they create.

One reason *Watermill* seems terribly long to the audience is that it uses this same held-back sense of time—except that where Evanitsky's concern is with pure movement, Robbins portrays a quite realistic narrative situation. We get the feeling that someone is deliberately keeping the dance from going at its normal pace, as indeed someone is.

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But also, *Watermill* is in fact a long dance, about an hour. The simple fact of duration is important to Robbins' theme, which is nothing less than the totality of a man's life. Robert Wilson, from whom Robbins derived major inspiration for *Watermill*, creates epic-length productions; to him an hour is just a start. His most recent work, *Overture for Ka Mountain and Guardenia* [sic] *Ter-race*, was given in two parts, from 6 to 9 a.m. and 6 to 9 p.m. Wilson called this work "an introduction" to an even larger piece he was planning for performances in France and Iran. Mere-

dith Monk too is fond of lengthy pieces in several installments. Her Joan of Arc piece, *Vessel*, had three segments of about an hour and a half each, in three different locations in downtown New York.

These choreographers have specific reasons for making extremely long works; it's not that they are unable to edit themselves. Something happens to you as audience when you stay involved with the same group of performers and the same theme for such a long time. The formalities begin to break down. You get relaxed and comfortable with where you are, you get to know your neighbors, you may chat quietly, smoke, go out for something to eat and come back. It's like a baseball double header, with much the same attitude, of familiarity toward the players, of not having to pay close attention all the time. You are free to do this because you're in an informal space rather than a proscenium stage, which focusses your attention and limits your means of responding to a work.

Both Monk and Wilson lead semi-communal groups of people who live and work together, and their theater-pieces stress the continuum of people's lives in that kind of community. You are meant to be aware of their growth, of the pasts and personalities that have contributed to the theater event. You're meant to feel that you've grown somewhere with them while you've been visiting.

In *Ka Mountain* a girl builds a small cairn of rocks, placing them one by one in a pile, with a branch of juniper on top. Later the juniper bursts into flame. Still later a little girl dressed as an old woman laboriously lifts the rocks and the unburned twigs one by one into a basket and drags it all away. This could be done much more economically—and it would be in the conventioinal theater. Dance is full of stylized work movements, like the peasants' hay-cutting dance in *La Fille Mal Gardée* or the chain gang swinging its invisible heavy hammers in Donald McKayle's *Rainbow 'Round My Shoulder*. There are scenic transformations and things that grow or get built by magic. A hundred years' worth of vines and cobwebs creep over the castle in *Sleeping Beauty*. Hilarion puts the finishing touches on a cross to place on Giselle's grave in the woods. The toy Nutcracker turns into a prince.

What Robert Wilson is saying is that work is *not* magic. When he substitutes real work for stagecraft he's not only making the audience more aware of the task that's being done, he's also calling attention to the other lovingly fashioned artifacts that are part of the production—a pyramid made of wooden boards mortised and dowelled together—the very doorposts of the room we sit in, made of cement poured into wooden frames, with smooth, striated rocks mounted on them for decoration. This is no stage set. This is the life of the people who make this theater.

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The idea of showing how long it takes to make something instead of taking a theatrical shortcut is related to the idea of endurance. Rather than skip over or disguise the effort required to do something hard, some people want to emphasize the effort. Kei Takei and William Dunas have circumvented the almost universal attitude in dance that certain physical reactions are unacceptable in performance. They don't pace their dances so that they can catch their breath, or duck offstage when their legs get rubbery from too much running. Both of them, in fact, have worked on extending a movement sequence to the verge of exhaustion. The resulting physical depletion makes its own dramatic point.

Dunas' recent solos have been made up of many variations on a calculated few dance themes. In *The King Is Dead* he examined at least fifteen elements of traditional jazz dancing, building a little dance around each element—a rubberlegs dance, a knee lifting dance, a mooching dance. In between these sequences he stopped—composed at first, gasping toward the end—and transformed himself into another character, a rigid, clothespin doll of a man who made slashing gestures with his arms and issued strangled commands. The dance lasted over an hour, and although Dunas produced no changes of intensity, no “acting” clues that would develop these characterizations, as time wore on the jazz dancer seemed to be suffering intolerably while the angry puppet grew oppressively more cruel and irrational.

Kei Takei's *Light Part V* presents a monolithic arrangement of three bodies, Takei and two men—one person holding the other two up until they all topple, lie on the floor gathering strength, and slowly pull themselves up again into a new position. That's the whole dance, except that sometimes Takei stands with her face to the ceiling and her eyes closed. You are forced into an intense awareness of these bodies, their shapes and mass—Takei, built like a twelve-year-old, with the tenacity of a fierce hunting animal—the men, neither of them young, one tough and highly-strung, the other heavy and obdurate. You note the different ways they support each other, the points of weakness and tension, the first sign of collapse, the lack of resilience when they come apart and fall, and at the same time you feel the permanence of the image they are creating—that the structure will survive because they have an endless capacity for restoring and re-creating it. Is it courage, is it madness? Is it blind evolution?

Takei, Dunas and the rest are certainly not making conventional theater, but in every important sense of the word they are theatrical. More theatrical, I think, than a piece like Glen Tetley's sometimes-nude ballet *Mutations*, performed by the Netherlands

Dance Theater. Here only the *idea* of the ballet was theatrical. Dancers were going to cover and uncover their bodies—with clothes or paint or grotesque costumes. Tetley extended the time it took to accomplish all these changes and filled it with a lot of motion of no particular originality or focus. The audience feels suspense because we have to wait so long for the promised exposé, but our response to what is happening *during* that long wait is anything but heightened.

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Not only the most experimental choreographers use time to reshape the immediate event. The second act of George Balanchine's *Don Quixote*, which is about as bizarre and unconventional a story ballet as has ever been made, takes place in the court of a sadistic Duke and Duchess, who have brought the befuddled Don there as a kind of jester. The Don thinks he's being rewarded at last for his brave and noble qualities. The people of the court wear stiff, heavy black and gold costumes, and they move with exaggerated slowness. The steps of their procession and sarabande are portentous, oblique, mocking. Their cruelty is prolonged and deliberate, and the Don's martyrdom at their hands is dwelt upon as if it were a cherished thing. I got the impression the whole scene was taking place in the Don's self-pitying mind. It was as if by slowing down the action in his imagination, he was savoring and magnifying the wrongs that had been done to him.

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We're probably more aware of slowed-down theater time than speeded-up time, because American life, especially American life in cities, is fast. Once I was in Montreal at noontime on a working day. I wasn't in any particular hurry, but the crowds seemed to be moving at a crawl; I could hardly keep myself lagging along at their pace. We pick it up right away whenever a theater action decelerates, but extra speed on stage fits in unobtrusively with our own racing rhythms. We're impressed with speed, we even crave it if we don't have to do anything to achieve it.

Gerald Arpino, chief choreographer of the City Center Joffrey Ballet, has been gradually modifying the classic ballet style with this jet-age infatuation in mind. Arpino has always known the spectacular uses of fast dancing and the dramatic effect of changes of pace, suddenness and gradualness; and allegro dancing accounted in part for the success of such works as *Viva Vivaldi* and *Confetti*. With his rock ballet *Trinity* Arpino seems to have decided on speed as a primary method of operating.

Everything in *Trinity* is pushed just a little faster than it should go. The ballet opens with dancers running across the stage, taking giant leaps that change direction in midair. This propulsion comes from nowhere. There's no development of tension, no time for

revving up the motors, it's just a natural resource that can be turned on at will. Tap water. Later there's a more subdued, romantic section where the man lifts a girl high above his head with one arm. Having hoisted her up there, he's not content to simply stand and admire her, or carry her off in triumph. He runs with her. And other running couples fill the stage—the girls backbending down over the men's supporting arms, with their limbs streaming out as if in a fast current. The final section begins in a salvo of urgent punches and ends with a visual image of calm: all the dancers placing candles on the floor and going away as the music recedes from a roar to a heartbeat. Yet the ballet's drive doesn't let up—the walking is formal, the energy contained only by the pulsating rhythm. And we find, with the curtain falling to that rhythm, that it's been driving us too, all along.

After *Trinity*, Arpino refined this idea of speed-ballet. He quoted from other ballets and hyped them up—a solo from *Giselle* done at nearly double time in *Kettentanz*, for instance. He crowded so many steps into each musical phrase of *Chabriesque* and *Reflections* that he had to develop a kind of platoon system, sending in new groups of dancers every few bars to spell each other. Gradually you could see the dancers in his ballets losing their classic line without losing their virtuosity. Arpino's pace forced them to omit details—they were good at covering a lot of space, but small changes of position like foot beats or arm adjustments were blurred out of existence. They could spin like demons, and they almost always exited in the air so your last impression of them was of human cannonballs. To the ballet-goer these dancers look unbeautiful, but to the general audience they're a replica of the nervous expertise of our times.

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For the visual satisfactions of balletic style Arpino substitutes a sort of Hollywood-romantic illusion that softens the contacts between the dancers. Men hold the women tighter than is necessary for support—they grab and snatch in a facsimile of modern passion, not the sissified, delicate handling of classic ballet. The women don't merely lean on the men's shoulders or arms, if possible they twine their arms around the men's necks, they hug instead of merely touching.

Arpino-ballet is kitsch, but so is *Watermill*, with its pretty, pseudo-Oriental demeanor and the importance it lends to ordinariness. Robbins never quite makes a case for the characters in his ballets—I wonder why I should be interested in them since they are always just passing through my field of view, acting out dramas that have neither beginning nor end. But I usually am interested

in them, because of the compelling way Robbins puts together the dynamics.

Changes of speed in his *Dances at a Gathering* provide the dancers with a wide range of possibilities for expressiveness and interaction with each other and with the music. You don't need a lot of elaborate staging or literal acting-out to tell you that these characters are real. They describe their own feelings: they chase each other, daydream, rush ahead of the beat, walk slowly arm in arm, race, reconnoiter, stop. Deprived of these time changes, *Watermill* seems much less human, more pretentious. The central character's banality is exposed and even emphasized as the unexceptional events of his life trail across a carefully detailed scenic canvas. I don't think this is at all what Robbins intended, but the audience can hardly be blamed if it misunderstands.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir:

May I dissociate myself from the exchange of letters between Clayton Eshleman and Vernon Young in the Summer issue? An in-temperate and obfuscating exchange, it seems to me. Young's use of an old review of mine to explain Eshleman's attack and then to buttress, at least indirectly, his own contentions, is unfair to me. I have to say that I dislike most of the opinions and deplore all the sentiments in the two letters. Particularly with respect to three poets mentioned, Robert Creeley, Robert Kelly, and Arthur Gregor, I think each has given us poems essential to the life of the spirit in America during recent years, and anything I have written about them must be construed in terms of this basic assessment, which I had thought was clear. What is more important to me, however, is that the attitudes toward art and criticism revealed by the two correspondents—prescriptive, not to say authoritarian, attitudes—are just what I consider most damaging in our literary community. Over the years I have done as much as I could to exclude them from my own writing and dispel them from the writing of others.

HAYDEN CARRUTH

Johnson, Vermont

Reviews

PATRICK CRUTTWELL

“Private Faces in Public Places”

HISTORY IS STUDDED WITH EXAMPLES of ill-starred efforts by intellectuals of all sorts—philosophers, poets, novelists—to intervene directly, to take an active part, in the world of politics and power. One can begin with Plato advising a Sicilian tyrant and Aristotle acting as tutor to Alexander the Great, and continue with Milton's uneasy involvement with the Commonwealth and Cromwell's dictatorship, Swift's four years of what he believed to be “power” during the Tory government of Oxford and Bolingbroke, Yeats's tentative flirtation with Irish fascism in the 1930's, Pound's disastrous dealings with the Italian variety of the same thing—all the way to those “marches on the Pentagon” by a fine assortment of literary “armies of the night,” the effect of which on American actions in Vietnam appears to have been precisely nothing.

If these examples are representative, it seems that the *wrong* way for intellectuals to interest themselves in power and politics is the way of direct involvement. Their minds work in a style incurably different from that of the born politician, and probably from that of the average voter or subject. Their intelligence and sensitiveness are often nullified by a certain naivete; they expect that when a policy has been irresistibly demonstrated to be both stupid and wicked, the general public will be convinced and the men in power persuaded or forced to abandon it; but in truth—and again the most obvious current example is Vietnam—the general public remains apathetic or puzzled, and the men in power grow more and more in love with their policy the longer they have held to it and the more it is attacked. They just cannot admit that they have been so wrong and for so long. They are probably quite sincere in this—after all, reluctance to admit one's own intellectual or moral wrongness is a phenomenon we are all aware of in our private selves—and perhaps another naivete to which intellectuals are prone is a tendency to find “villains,” persons knowingly doing wrong, whereas the men they have to deal with are tough and obstinate individuals entirely dedicated to the pursuit and retention of power, who have convinced themselves that anything which contributes to that end must be also for the common benefit. “What's good for General Motors,” in fact, “is good for the country.”

On the other hand, virtually every imaginative writer of any stature has been deeply interested in public events and the world of political

power, and has felt impelled to express his interest in imaginative writing; it is just not possible, in fact, to say anything worth saying about human life without that interest. But *how* to express it—how to do that without damaging the imaginative quality of the work—that has always been the real difficulty. All sorts of traps lie in the way. The danger of lapsing into crude propaganda; the danger of being naive because one is dealing with a world alien and unknown to oneself; the danger of obtruding one's private self with the effect of trivializing the public event one is dealing with; the danger of simple misjudgment, which may lead to becoming passionately committed to some public cause which posterity will decide was insignificant and thereby looking a fool, as Pound did with his passion for Major Douglas and his Social Credit: these are some of the more obvious traps, and the ones most frequently fallen into.

Of all sorts of writers, poets seem the most endangered by such traps. Prose fiction is a more discursive, more loosely-knit genre, less committed to a continuous intensity, its texture less closely interwoven with the writer's private self; it can therefore accommodate more easily direct comment on public events. (No *poem* could survive the great slabs of philosophizing about history and society which Tolstoy and George Eliot contrived to put into their novels without destroying them.) The poet, when he writes on public events, commits himself to achieving something which will seem both adequate comment, sensible and sensitive, on the events themselves *and* a true expression of his own private vision. And he has much less space than the novelist in which to achieve this double aim.

It is exactly this that Thomas R. Edwards' book¹ is concerned with. He defines its subject in the introduction: "A man who is a poet finds himself writing (for whatever reason) a poem about men who are not poets but 'public men'—kings, soldiers, politicians—or about the 'public conditions' that seem the consequence of what such men do." And at the end he indicates his criterion for success in such a poem: the effective "intermingling of mind with world." The method he uses is not an examination of poets, but of particular poems, beginning with Spenser's "Colin Clout" and continuing through Marlowe's "Tamburlaine," Marvell's "Horatian Ode" on Cromwell, "Paradise Lost," Pope's "Epilogue to the Satires," and so on, until he ends with some political poems by Robert Lowell. This method has its obvious advantages—it gives room for detailed analyses of the poems chosen—but it has also its drawbacks. One trouble is the inevitable effect of jerkiness, as if one were being transported very rapidly from one small area of land to another, with a minimal knowledge of the large territories between them. It involves also the sacrifice of some themes interesting in themselves and very relevant to the main thesis:

¹ IMAGINATION AND POWER, by Thomas R. Edwards. Oxford University Press. \$7.50.

in particular, the varying reactions of individual poets to public events throughout their careers—not just in one, or one or two, poems—and the reasons why their reactions varied. Why did Milton feel impelled to disturb the mythological and timeless pastoralism of “Lycidas” with a passage of crude propaganda against the bishops? Why is his sonnet “On the Late Massacre in Piedmont” an artistic triumph, although it too is naked propaganda? Why is Marvell’s “Horatian Ode” a great poem, whereas his post-Restoration satires are cheap lampoons? Were Wordsworth’s increasingly reactionary political opinions and the decline of his poetic imagination interconnected, not just more or less simultaneous—and if interconnected, what was the connection? And so on. I suspect that if Edwards had given himself room to discuss such questions, the result would have been a rather solider piece of work, instead of one which, as he admits himself, is a book of “speculations and guesses.”

Still, a book has to be taken for what it is, not for what it might have been. And certainly Edwards’ “speculations and guesses” are highly intelligent and stimulating. The general history which emerges from them goes something like this.

The Renaissance, with its veneration for the classical epic, which is based on the belief “that heroism is a possible and valuable image of man,” “was an age when one could celebrate power and glory,” an age which was full of “open, even simple-minded glorifications of strong men.” But this was already becoming difficult by the seventeenth century, and the increasing difficulty can be seen in the ambivalence towards the Hero, the strong man, exhibited in Shakespeare’s treatment of Coriolanus, Marvell’s of Cromwell, and Milton’s of Satan. This ambivalence very quickly turns into a positively anti-heroic stance; the Hero is totally debunked, in such lines as Pope’s

Heroes are much the same, the point’s agreed,
From Macedonia’s madman to the Swede;
The whole strange purpose of their lives, to find,
Or make, an enemy of all mankind!

—and this debunking of the Hero spreads into the treatment of public men in general. All that the eighteenth-century poets can do is “to cultivate impartiality, and most of them frankly begin in hostility and contempt for politics and power.” Hence the dominance of satire. Even those eighteenth-century poets who are not satirists—Goldsmith and Gray—can do little more with public events than turn away from them in a mood of melancholy nostalgia.

From this surrender, this withdrawal, the romantic poets engineered a reaction. “Romanticism was to be as much a discovery of new political modes, and a new involvement of poetic imagination in politics and myths that express it, as it was to be anything else.” But the romantic involvement was not to be a revival of the celebration of the

Hero; it was to be revolutionary. "One of the chosen tasks of the new age was to make connections between poetic imagination and the politics of unrest and revolution. . . . In what sense could a radical politics objectify the energies and aims of a radical aesthetics?" (I believe, myself, that the situation was a trifle more complicated than this. Not all the romantics were revolutionaries; Scott, for example, was thoroughly reactionary in his politics. And there was the passionate cult of Napoleon, perhaps the last embodiment of the Hero potent enough to evoke such a cult; Hazlitt was an English exemplar of this.) As a result, presumably, of the basic, or at least apparent, failure of the first revolutionary wave in the years after Waterloo, nineteenth-century poets reverted to something like the withdrawal of Gray; they tended to escape from the difficulty of writing poems on public themes through "the idealization of art." "Victorian poets had trouble doing justice to public subjects"; that task, in effect, was handed over to the prose of the novelists and of social commentators such as Arnold (in his prose, but not, significantly, in his verse).

Finally, in the twentieth century, the distinction between "public" and "private," "inner" and "outer," has become blurred, as a result, I suppose, of the development of psychology. We "psycho-analyze" our public men, as is very obvious in Auden's work. This, together with the intelligentsia's general disgust and disillusionment with all public life (itself the consequence of nearly sixty years of incessant war and revolution leading, it seems, either to nowhere or to disaster), has resulted in poems pervaded by a far deeper ambivalence than those of the seventeenth century. More than an ambivalence, in truth: it is a real confusion. Yeats's "Easter, 1916" cannot quite decide whether to deplore or celebrate the heroes of the Dublin rising; Auden's "September 1, 1939" "can't decide whether to take the war as a general human disaster or as an annoying invasion of the poet's privacy"; Lowell's "The March" is so much concerned with the absurdity of the poet's personal appearance and behavior at the Pentagon as to "unfairly lessen the occasion's importance." (But I wonder, as I hinted in my first paragraph, if the occasion really *was* important, except as an episode in the personal lives of some individuals?—in which case, Lowell's ironic self-mockery may be seen as an accurate comment on the event itself.)

I find this a true and provocative account of the poets' responses to public events through the last four hundred years. There are some details I would query. Edwards' last sentence affirms that some of Lowell's poems, notably "July in Washington," demonstrate the possibility of writing successful public poems in our time, but that such successes are "difficult and rare." They certainly are: but are they really more difficult and rare than in earlier times, as Edwards' comment seems to imply? He cites, for example, as an outstanding success,

Dryden's "The Medal," a philippic against the Whig politician Shaftesbury; but if he has looked into those fat and numerous volumes of "State Poems" written about the same time, he will know that that one poetic success has to be set against hundreds (literally) of the dimmest of failures. His examination of Wordsworth's "Invasion" sonnets demonstrates the same; it shows how their quality ranges from the crudest sort of patriotic ranting to poetry as fine as anything Wordsworth ever wrote.

I feel also that Edwards is somewhat too summary in his dismissal of Victorian poetry as, in effect, giving up the attempt to deal with public events. Tennyson, for one, did at least try. In "Maud," the hero's personal disaster is related to economic and political events; his father has been ruined, and committed suicide, because "a vast speculation had fail'd," and this is seen as part of a general corruption of the country by commercial values—"who but a fool would have faith in a tradesman's ware or his word?" And in the "Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington," Tennyson makes a gallant effort to reinstate the long-discredited Hero and set him up as exemplar for an age of "brainless mobs and lawless Powers." I am not prepared to argue that these attempts were entirely successful; but they *were* attempts, and perhaps an examination of why they fail (if they do) would have been germane to Edwards' argument.

It seems beyond question that successful poems on public events are, and I would say always have been, "difficult and rare." But exactly why? I suspect that the true reason is that when a poet tackles such themes, he is haunted by an uneasy sensation that he is stepping outside his proper role. (What that is, he may not be sure; but he wonders unhappily whether this is *not* it.) He knows that he has been deeply moved by the public events he writes about; if he had not been, he would *never* even have tried to write about them. But the manner in which he has been moved, and the areas of his being which have been affected, are not the same as those which normally impel him to make a poem. The events themselves remain obstinately external, and it is likely that the motive behind the poem was itself, to some degree, external; he had felt it to be his "duty" to write it. Yeats, at the end of a long career which had included a great deal of concern about public affairs and some involvement in them (at least, he had been an Irish Senator), wrote that little poem called "Politics," which takes as its epigraph a saying of Thomas Mann's: "In our time the destiny of man presents its meaning in political terms."

How can I, that girl standing there,
My attention fix
On Roman or on Russian
Or on Spanish politics?
Yet here's a travelled man that knows
What he talks about,

And there's a politician
That has read and thought,
And maybe what they say is true
Of war and war's alarms,
But O that I were young again
And held her in my arms!

You can take that, according to taste, for senile escapism or ultimate honesty; but I am sure that what it says expresses an impatience, a feeling that politics was not his true subject, which had been part of Yeats throughout. And part, too, of almost every poet: though what he feels himself distracted from need not be a "girl standing there." It could always be God.

To Our Readers:

Two new books by editors of THE HUDSON REVIEW have recently been, or are about to be, published. In accordance with our policy, they will not be reviewed in these pages, but are listed here for the interest of our readers:

FREDERICK MORGAN: *A Book of Change*. Scribner's. \$7.95.

VERNON YOUNG: *On Film*. Quadrangle. \$12.50.

RICHMOND LATTIMORE

Poetry Chronicle

THE QUARTERLY BAG CONTAINS more than forty new volumes of poetry, too many for the scope of this chronicle which, if it noticed all, would be reduced to a bare catalogue. There are books here, which have somehow contrived to be published, which can hastily be forgotten except as symptoms of the trade. Others impose painful problems. In particular, three poets¹ have left me at a loss. One does not have to review the blurbs, though one frequently does so; anyway, I note that John Ashbery comes warmly recommended by John Hollander, and Stephen Dobyns by Richard Howard and James Merrill, or at least they are partly responsible for his Lamont Award. Hollander, Howard and Merrill are poets exceedingly high in my regard, and I wish I were reviewing them—their poems, that is, not their recommendations, which I fail to understand. Then again, Philip Levine has the praise of Hayden Carruth, another respected name, although his selections for *The Voice That Is Great Within Us* make me wonder whether he and I are writing about the same subject. But back to our poets. Ashbery begins:

I thought that if I could put it all down, that would be one way. And next the thought came to me that to leave all out would be another, and truer, way

clean-washed sea

The flowers were.

If I had quoted thus briefly from any other part of his series, the reader would say, yes, but the context. Context will not help. We shall be told that “the problem becomes more difficult,” but not what the problem is; or that “on the streets, in private places, they have no idea of the importance of these things,” but I look in vain to find who “they” are, or what “these things” may be. Then, here is “To Close My Hand” taken at random (for I have no favorites) from Dobyns:

Dogs of large benevolence, spaniels and dark hounds,
bringing bones shining with goodness, small tokens
from the leash. Who am I to close my hand?

¹ THREE POEMS, by John Ashbery. Viking. \$5.95. CONCURRING BEASTS, by Stephen Dobyns. Atheneum. \$3.95. THEY FEED THEY LION, by Philip Levine. Atheneum. \$3.95.

To you, with the pockets of your skin gleaming
in a dying sun; red birds searching for diamonds,
twilight—why should I ease my kindness?

Small yellow men return bits of metal we have
given them. We count out their bodies; the skins
of animals, beavers; the rising cost of hats. Who
am I to close my hand?

To myself I present the other hand. It meets, enters
like a courtesan, whispers a few public secrets,
then gives, then sleeps. Why should I close it?

Or you, a stranger, with your myth and stoney name,
what can you give me? A flag to sleep on, the quiet
of long fields, the touch of horses to close my hand.

That's all there is, and why should he close his hand (or not close it for that matter)? I can't imagine. And yet I have the uneasy feeling that behind such deliberate mystification there may lurk a real talent.

Levine does contrive, usually requiring some length for the purpose, a few effective whole poems, such as "Angel Butcher" and "Waking in Alicante"; but he also too much of the time achieves "originality" (if that is what he is after), only through piling up unassimilated incongruities. Thus begins "They Feed They Lion" (the title is evidently not a misprint):

Out of burlap sacks, out of bearing butter,
Out of black bean and wet slate bread,
Out of the acids of rage, the candor of tar,
Out of creosote, gasoline, drive shafts, wooden dollies,
They Lion Grow.

Out of the gray hills
Of industrial barns, out of rain, out of bus ride,
West Virginia to Kiss My Ass, out of buried aunties,
Mothers hardening like pounded stumps, out of stumps,
Out of the bones' need to sharpen and the muscles' to stretch,
They Lion grow.

What has the second series to do with the first, or with itself for that matter? Since the eighteenth century good poets have driven verbal combinations close to the edge of meaning, close, that is, to nonsense, or incomprehensibility. But the remoter or unlikelier the transitions demanded, the more there is need of verbal magic, and here there is none. Or so I think. Standards change, or waver.

I may be wrong. That is why I chose to review these three volumes, appreciated by others but not by me, instead of several others which I liked better.

We pass to the other extreme, the explicit Vietnam poems of Michael Casey.² They come fresh and hot from the highways and bases where Casey served as patrolman and gate guard, studied the language, made friends with many Vietnamese (a dink lover) and wrote his impressions of sergeants, pows, corpses, vd, a pet chicken fed to Dorothy the company pig, and various obscenities. "A Bummer," of a farmer overrun by American tracks and what he can ro about it, seems already to have become a famous poem. Consider instead "27th Surgical Hospital":

The honcho nurse there
 Hates dinks
 This head nurse
 Always hassles me
 When I bring one in
 The first thing
 She asks me is
 Is he a combat casualty?
 Hell no, lady
 This dink just
 Got hit by a truck
 An American truck
 That beat feet after hitting him
 An he bleeding
 All over my spit shine
 Take him to the Vietnamese hospital in An Tan
 The woman don't realize
 That it's far away
 That her hospital's closer
 That blood makes me sick

Poems such as this, some funny, some revolting, some touching, depend heavily on the heavy subject-matter, but are true to that dependence. They are immediate, as most poetry is not. The raw material could have been transformed into something else. Yet with something of Mauldin, something of Spoon River, something of Archie, something of Pogo, these poems have a rhetoric of arrangement essential to their success. Rewrite this poem as prose, and punctuate it if you like, and it will lose much. The unmusical units are dropped on the page with a sure economy.

Louis Simpson has collected about fifty poems written since 1964.³

² OBSCENITIES, by *Michael Casey*. Yale University. \$5.00.

³ ADVENTURES OF THE LETTER I, by *Louis Simpson*. Harper & Row. \$2.65.

These are mostly rather dreamlike pieces, often evocative of an experience never quite experienced, as of the Ukraine, where the Jamaica-born poet's mother came from. Because, perhaps, of the subject matter, or for whatever reason, but not, I hope and believe, just to be fashionable, Simpson has here abandoned the precisely articulated stanzaic poems through which he made his reputation. Rhyme is virtually absent, the style is more free and impressionistic, the ear is sure and good. It is difficult to do justice to this collection by quoting. Not only are the poems elusive; many of the shorter ones, with a general drift toward irony, are so carefully understated that they come out sounding trivial. But several of the longer pieces show that quality so rare in our time, a talent for narrative in poetry. My favorite is "Vandergast And The Girl"; the insurance man (for a firm represented by a phoenix) and his picked-up sweetheart, no such new matter, but told with grace and charm. I will quote the end of it:

And Vandergast moved to New Jersey,
 where he works for an insurance company
 whose emblem is the Rock of Gibraltar—
 the rest of his life laid out
 with the child-support and alimony payments.

As for the girl, she vanished.

Was it worth it? Ask Vandergast.
 You'd have to be Vandergast, looking through his eyes
 at the house across the street, in Orange, New Jersey.
 Maybe on wet days umbrellas and raincoats
 set his heart thudding.

Maybe
 he talks to his pillow, and it whispers,
 moving red hair.

In any case, he will soon be forty.

But almost the best thing in the book is the poet's little preface, to the Russian or Ukrainian part. It is as much of a poem as almost any poem in prose can be, and it ends: "I have come to think of the country around Lutsk, where my mother's people lived, as a muddy plain with a dismal climate. Yet recently I met a Polish dramatic critic who remembered spending a fortnight on the river near Lutsk canoeing with a girl. She was dressed like a Viennese and carried a blue parasol." But why did not the gifted Simpson *make* a poem out of that? He could have.

I come next to two young or youngish poets who have combined

new poems with a considerable body of previous work. George MacBeth,⁴ as I learn from his publishers, has won himself a prominent place in Britain as a producer and reader on the B.B.C. This volume, described as a "complete selection" (what exactly does that mean?) is by no means slim and is probably the most various of those before me. This time, against four bits of praise on the blurb, we are also given three bits of censure, summed up in the words of the *T.L.S.* reviewer: "Extraordinary gifts arrogantly wasted." Well, MacBeth does a little fooling, and he gives us some unabashed doggerel, sometimes tasteless and unfunny, but he also gives us a great deal more. "A Light In Winter" tells, powerfully at times, the beginning and end of an affair. "A Christmas Ring" is an elaborate interlocked sonnet sequence. There are good animals, elements, and materials for "Noah's Journey." There are also some heavy constructions in classical stanzaic verse, occasionally moving, sometimes sticky to follow or rather dull. But the thing is, he has the technique at his fingertips, and the art lies behind and lends certainty to his less formal poems. I like, among these, "At Crufts." That seems to mean a dog show and offers eighteen dog poems, all excellent. The Boston Terrier, for instance, has "something of/ a lawyer's look,/ my mid-Victorian,/ Yankee/ dandy, round-/ supercilious-/ eyed"; the Dobermann sits "in/ smooth black/ and orange/ killing skin"; the Weimaraner's "eyes are what/ matter most, those/ bottomless dreaming/ yellows." MacBeth can positively give delight. The "Ode On A Grecian Urn, After Keats" must be read with care. In case you may no longer know all the original by heart, do please get it out and look at it again, because it's all there in MacBeth, all five stanzas in order. I would love to quote it entire, but here is stanza two:

It's always
easier on the ear
not to have the
 music
actually *playing*
 I
mean, if the oboe
tickles the fine roots
of the metaphysical
 man, not
the material one, you
draw a bonus.
 As,
for example, that

⁴ COLLECTED POEMS 1958-1970, by George MacBeth. Atheneum. \$7.50.

fine boy there
 in the clearing, he
 won't ever get
 what he's after, or
 see
 (for that matter) the
 leaves fall,
 but she'll
 be as Camay-fresh
 and desirable
 tomorrow, that
 cool bint with
 the Jimi Hendrix.

I don't know what a Jimi Hendrix is, and I don't know that MacBeth didn't get his idea from Starbuck's enchanting "Translations From The English," but what of that? This poem is cool enough on its own, and it gets better the longer it goes on.

Samuel Hazo,⁵ who seems to be in his forties, brings us once again a rather early-on collected volume; that is, selections from five previous books, plus a new series which lends its somewhat mysterious title to the whole. The subject is mostly Hazo, the constant pursuit through memory through mirrors through others of the ever-elusive self. Occasional set pieces materialize situations objectively imagined, like "The Morning The Ocean Was Missing" or "The Year The Girls Went Naked," but the progress moves toward what we find in the last part, a raggedly arranged autobiography. Like others here reviewed, Hazo has emerged from an apprenticeship in conservatively formal verse. Seldom does he move with ease in such measures; sharp images and sharp thoughts are locked up in metre. And then, once more, it happens: solidly based on technique the freer versions come out with a special mastery in the last part of the book. Here is brilliance of phrase: "And gong it goes/ it goes, it goes . . ./ And tones go sheeping over,/ after, under one/ another" ("Bellbeat"); "I weaken/ into him the way a ripe/ idea rots into an ism" ("Horizontals"). "The Sum" adds up all he has drunk, eaten, worn, traveled, taught. It ends with "I'm not the sum of all/ these parts. One plus one/ equals nothing but now—/ and now dies in the saying." It's metaphysical. It's true. "The Drenching," "Relics," "From Rock" are superb poems throughout, and I wish I could quote them all. I make do with the last part of "From Rock" (talking with a sculptor, surrounded by his marble goddesses, and is that sculptor real, who makes statues like that now?):

⁵ ONCE FOR THE LAST BANDIT, by Samuel Hazo. University of Pittsburgh. \$5.95.

against his sails. The seas are heaved to heaven.
 The oars are cracked; the prow sheers off; the waves
 attack broadside; against his hull the swell
 now shatters in a heap, mountainous, steep.

These lines are splendid in their vigor, but the pace is not sustained and the narrative becomes merely readable, which, despite some rather wooden enjambment, it remains to the end. That is no small achievement, but I still do not think English blank verse is the right medium for Greek or Latin hexameters. As such, this version, worthy enough, lacks the distinction of Fitzgerald's blank-verse *Odyssey*. Bridges' quantitative English hexameters remain the best Virgil in English, but he left us only part of the Fourth Book.

The Propertius of John Warden is something quite different. Though he confined himself to the elegiac metre, Propertius was able to give it extraordinary versatility; English substitutes, such as the loosely representative alternations of longer and shorter lines which Warden mostly uses, can not quite reproduce the changing tone and pace of the Latin. For this reason, perhaps, Warden has varied his version with short lines, some rhymed forms, even stanzas. The translation is rather free. Though Warden notes that "Propertius' use of allusion is an organic part of his poetical method," many names are left out, which is rather surprising in the case of a translation equipped with a glossary of names. Also, matters appear in the translation which were not in the original. For instance (I.2):

Think of Leucippus' daughters—
 They didn't need to paint themselves like you,
 when they made the heavenly twins grow hot.

Nor did Marpessa—
 yet she brought a man and a god to blows with her beauty,
 by the banks of her father's watery grave.

The Latin names Leucippus' daughters, Phoebe and Hilaira, also Castor and Pollux, calls Marpessa Euenus' daughter, and has nothing whatever to say about his watery grave. This is freedom, not inaccuracy; Warden's credentials are impeccable. Furthermore, he has brought some simple magic to bear on this version of what is so largely a tale of Propertius and his Cynthia, those ardent incontinent inconstant tragic lovers. Literally done in the Loeb version of Butler, for instance, we get in I.5: "Wherefore cease, Gallus, to seek to learn my Cynthia's power (*quid possit mea Cynthia*). Heavy the toll they pay in answer to whose prayer she comes." This is not insensitive, but it is certainly cumbersome. Less accurate, but

erous and courteous poet, furnished notes, and assembled a very galaxy of other translators, namely: Ben Belitt, Alan Dugan, William Ferguson, Robert Fitzgerald, John Hollander, Richard Howard with Cesar Rennert, W. S. Merwin, Alastair Reid, Mark Strand, John Updike, and Richard Wilbur. In versatility and humanity certainly, in talent as I believe, Borges surpasses Neruda. He has a large variety of forms; the long loose free line, but also sonnets, popular style ballads, quatrains. And he has a large variety of subjects: reminiscence, biography, poems of courtship, dedications to unfortunate friends, histories, battles, above all, again and again, the streets and the houses and graveyards, the feel of the city, Buenos Aires. He also has a surprising addiction to Anglo-Saxon and Norse. There are even two poems in English. The variety of the translation may be represented by the extremes. At one end there is Merwin, who has a tendency to translate into alike-sounding Merwin—not that he does not write well; I wonder whether he ever published a bad line except when his original has made him do it—but he will not rhyme or articulate a closed poem. So I quote a few lines from a free, open poem, “To A Minor Poet Of The Greek Anthology”:

Among the asphodels of the Shadow, your shade, in its
vanity,
must consider the gods ungenerous.

But the days are a web of small troubles,
and is there a greater blessing
than to be the ash of which oblivion is made?

Above other heads the gods kindled
the inexorable light of glory, which peers into the
secret parts and discovers each separate fault;
glory, that at last shrivels the rose it reveres;
they were more considerate with you, brother.

At the other end is Wilbur, who with amazing fidelity (Hollander rivals him) translates sonnets into sonnets. Here is “Everness”:

One thing does not exist: Oblivion.
God saves the metal and he saves the dross,
And his prophetic memory guards from loss
The moons to come, and those of evenings gone.
Everything is: the shadows in the glass
Which, in between the day's two twilights, you
Have scattered by the thousands, or shall strew
Henceforward in the mirrors that you pass.

And everything is part of that diverse
 Crystalline memory, the universe;
 Whoever through its endless mazes wanders
 Hears door on door click shut behind his stride,
 And only from the sunset's farther side,
 Shall view at last the Archetypes and the Splendors.

But it would be unfair to single out these few without saying that all the translators have done their work well.

What, finally, shall I say of the poetry of Chairman Mao? For one thing, that he is a true, dedicated poet who has written poems constantly, compulsively through his mature life, "during years of wandering and living in caves, writing all night, evening after evening and then throwing away his 'scribbles'." The scribbles are, by all accounts, strictly classical poems by the hand of a master. I can not judge the formal proficiency; and Barnstone's renderings are simply into graceful irregular verse; but true quality does show. While the poems are less programmatic than might have been expected, it is a bit of an exaggeration to say, as the editors do, that "never once does he descend to propaganda." Take the lines to "Militia Women": "Daughters of China with a marvelous will,/ you prefer hardy uniforms to colorful silk." The editors candidly remark that "this poem is said to have influenced Chinese styles of dress." I'll just bet it did. But it is only natural to expect some exultation over achievements such as the long March, and the partisanship is colored with real colors, as in "New Year's Day": "Below the mountain below the mountain/ wind blows our red banners like a painting." The red banners, which reappear frequently, are not *only* political. In "Huichang": "Our soldiers point and look eagerly south to Kwangtung,/ onion green and sensual in the distance." And here, to counteract those Militia Women, is the end of "In Praise Of The Winter Plum Blossom":

The plum is not a delicious girl showing off
 yet she heralds spring.
 When mountain flowers are in wild bloom
 she giggles in all the color.

Chairman Mao can be rather surprising, and I wish we could have more scribbles collected and translated for us.

MARVIN MUDRICK

Can You Forgive Him?

TROLLOPE HAD NO BUSINESS writing so many books, which moreover had no business being so very good. Even James Pope Hennessy, in this generally informative and sometimes ungrudging critical biography,¹ can't refrain from fits of temper calculated to prove that nobody's perfect, no not Trollope for all his skill, intelligence, wit, humor, energy, vivacity, reliability, thoroughness, and disgustingly exemplary professional habits. Trollope tells us, in his autobiography, that he got himself awakened every morning in time to carry through before breakfast his daily three-hour stint of authorship; and here, a century later, gets his knuckles rapped for *idleness*:

He has accused Thackeray of idleness—presumably because he did not begin writing at five thirty of a winter's morning—and of allowing his characters to proliferate in an uncontrolled manner; "his pen was not firm." It never occurred to Anthony that he was, as a matter of fact, a very great deal idler than Thackeray had ever been—for Thackeray would agree to shorten stories or articles at his editor's request, whereas Trollope, on being asked by Longman's to reduce *Barchester Towers* by one-third had flown into a rage and refused. . . . One cannot but presume that his literary output would have distinctly benefited had he spent several mornings a month asleep in bed until a human hour for rising. But he himself was perfectly satisfied that his morning's ration of novel-writing, timed to the second by the gold repeater on his desk, was a sign of an industrious virtue to which more frivolous or spasmodic writers lacked the courage to aspire. Scribbling two thousand words before breakfast, never rereading them, scarcely correcting the text save in proof-sheets for printers' errors—does not all this essentially smack of a gross and careless form of self-indulgence? Had he disciplined his pen with the same harsh rigour as that with which he disciplined his body to blunder from bed to desk at dawn in response to poor old Barney MacIntyre's early-bird call with a cup of coffee, he could undoubtedly have achieved a concision which he too seldom displays. . . .

But, as Pope Hennessy could have reminded himself by glancing at Chapter XV of the *Autobiography*, "Anthony" didn't begin writing at five-thirty and did in fact reread: between five-thirty a. m. and six he went over what he had written the day before; and "that . . . [a completed manuscript] should be read twice at least before it goes to

¹ ANTHONY TROLLOPE, by James Pope Hennessy. Little, Brown. \$10.00.

the printers, I take to be a matter of course." Also, the output was two thousand five hundred words per morning, not two thousand. Nor would Pope Hennessy, in a less fretful mood, have been likely to imply, as he does here, that (1) *Barchester Towers* would be better for being a third shorter, and (2) the novelist who produced a larger quantity of first-rate novels than any other novelist on record would "undoubtedly" have written still better novels if he had had worse habits (and if he had given up his active job at the post office, and his uneventful but time-consuming happy marriage, and his beloved fox-hunting, and his founding and editing of magazines, and running for Parliament, and his London clubs at which he was a boisterous talker and a busy official, and his voyages to Ireland, the Continent, the West Indies, the United States, Egypt, Australia, Ceylon, South Africa). If only Trollope had taken writing seriously, if he had sweated and fumed and stared at blank walls for weeks on end before extruding three sentences that burn with a hard gemlike flame! Instead, at home or in a ship or railway carriage or wherever he happened to be traveling or visiting, he scribbled away at a thousand words an hour (he counted every word, two hundred and fifty per page) from six a. m. to eight-thirty and could then, as he once did, come down to breakfast remarking, "I have just been making my twenty-seventh proposal of marriage." How was it possible for him to turn out (besides travel books, collections of short stories, letters, miles of post-office reports and proposals, as well as by his own account "political articles, critical, social and sporting articles, for periodicals without number")—how did such a monster of sloth manage to turn out forty-seven novels, most of them Victorian double- and triple-deckers, almost all of them absorbing and worthy of thoughtful attention, many excellent, a dozen or more among the glories of English fiction?

Pope Hennessy has other complaints. According to him, "Trollope was perhaps abnormally conscious of the value, the duties and the status of the English gentleman": for instance, on his children's baptismal certificates Trollope "described himself not as a postal surveyor but as a 'Gentleman'" (though Pope Hennessy doesn't mention the interesting precedent of Shakespeare, who, having obtained a coat-of-arms for his father, described himself in late documents not as an actor and stagehand but as a "Gentleman"). Or Trollope lacks a social conscience:

... the smoky caverns of human misery and despair into which both the landlords and the ironmasters of the Midlands and the North were herding a people until recently pastoral seem not to have impinged on Anthony's consciousness at all. His only references to the industrial scene in Britain were to use these as explaining why some of his characters were so enviably rich. In the opening pages of *Mr Scarborough's Family*, for example, a new industrial potter-

ies development is mentioned simply as explaining why the annual income of the pagan old squire of Tretton Park had increased from £4000 a year to £20,000. . . . Charles Dickens, for whom Anthony affected contempt, would have taken us by the hand and led us in amongst the white-faced, cursing factory girls and the stunted children working at the furnaces of the Tretton delf factory. Emile Zola and Maxence van der Meersch would have spared us no grim detail. But then none of these novelists were bound by a self-imposed limitation to write for well-brought-up English girls and for them alone. . . .

But Trollope treated, quite uncompromisingly, problems of private feeling and personal responsibility that may have been more troubling to well-brought-up English girls than Dickens's social indignation. Pope Hennessy's sneer at Trollope's "self-imposed limitation" is unpersuasive: Dickens was not so bold, or Trollope so timid, as the rhetoric insists: Dickens's sales and the evening readings aloud of his newest novel at every Victorian hearth don't seem to have been curtailed by his social conscience, which may now and then have sounded to some of his less excitable contemporaries like campaign oratory. Trollope was a meliorist who, believing that social change is necessary, held that the British parliamentary system is its proper instrument or at any rate authorizes it after the fact: the belief may be wrong or obsolete, but it isn't contemptible. (Much of the solidity of the very fine series of Palliser novels is in the episodes of parliamentary maneuver and debate.) Nobody was less interested than Trollope in the sociological axiom that a man or woman is unfairly incapacitated by disadvantages of class and upbringing, and nobody more interested in the data of social conditions: in his travel books, Trollope described "how a society was organized—politically, economically, and culturally. It is said that when Henry Adams visited Ceylon he sat for half an hour under the shoots of Buddha's bo-tree. Trollope had probably never heard of Buddha's bo-tree, but he leaves little to be said about the history of the coffee industry."² Trollope believed that a society is the sum of what the people in it do, he hated inertia and entropy, he wanted to know how things worked and he liked them in working order.

He was very sparing of pathos. Pope Hennessy complains of the dryness and reserve of the *Autobiography*: pages of bookkeeping about the money earned by each of Trollope's books, "maddeningly reticent" allusions to his marriage ("My marriage was like the marriage of other people and of no special interest to any one except my

² Bradford A. Booth, *Anthony Trollope* (Indiana University Press: Bloomington), 1958, p. 80. Trollope had probably even heard of Buddha's bo-tree. By his fifty-eighth year he had a personal library of five thousand volumes, and he was a devoted reader: "That I can read and be happy while I am reading, is a great blessing. Could I remember, as some men do, what I read, I should have been able to call myself an educated man."

wife and me"); yet how anybody can fail to be moved by Trollope's dry and reserved account of the terrible wretchedness of his boyhood and youth, or fail to be exhilarated by the bare assertion of miraculous and permanent change in his life as soon as he took the apparently hopeless job in Ireland, is a mystery that will have to be resolved by exasperated biographers.

Then Pope Hennessy, in alliance with Henry James, attacks certain Trollopian practices that he declines to consider innocuous:

[*Is He Popenjoy?*] . . . has always, in my opinion, been underrated—owing, perhaps, to its almost criminally idiotic title. We have noticed before Trollope's deliberate selection, from time to time, of what Henry James deplored as "fantastic names." It has in the past been suggested that such fatal choices came from an attempt on Trollope's part to emulate Thackeray, although it seems to me far more likely that he was influenced by the Tudor and Jacobean playwrights, the reading of whose works had for some years provided his chief form of mental recreation. Even as late as Sheridan writers for the English stage often used a surname to indicate trade or psychology—we have only to think of Lady Sneerwell in *The School for Scandal*. Trollope, however, dealt out some of his titles and his surnames with a hand of lead: Lord Grassangrains "that well-known breeder of bullocks," or Lord Gossling of Gossling castle, whose family name is de Geese and whose eldest son bears the courtesy title of Lord Giblet. . . .

It's hard to be patient with a critic who can't rejoice at such an inspiration as "Lord Giblet" (and distinguish it from the mere function denoted by such a mechanical doubling as "Lady Sneerwell"). Trollope's favorite and most impressive character succeeds to the title Duke of Omnium, his ducal house is Gatherum Castle: these are names which, like other names, take getting used to before they signify the person who bears them. And why not rejoice at the prodigality of an author who writes too many substantial novels to be bothered finding suitably stuffy names for all of them? Sometimes *Is He Popenjoy?* or *Can You Forgive Her?* or *He Knew He Was Right* will have to do. Pope Hennessy won't even accept Trollope's occasional brief Chaucerian appearances in the story ("I quite feel that an apology is due for beginning a novel with two long, dull chapters full of description"), and cites James on Trollope's "' . . . suicidal satisfaction in reminding the reader that the story he was telling was only, after all, a make-believe. . . .'" These little slaps at credulity are very discouraging. . . .'; as if the novelist were a stage magician whose effects depend on the public's being kept in the dark about all those explicable tricks.

There's just too much of Trollope, it's all bang in the open with no tricks, and if we don't watch out he'll be getting on our precious

nerves. A nearly excusable provocation is the fifth novel of the Paliser series, *The Prime Minister*. This may be the weakest of the series: the principal male character in one of the two main plots appears from the outset as an unreformable scoundrel of a simple money-grubbing sort; his victim is one of Trollope's notorious obstinate moonstruck females who get into their heads the notion that a first infatuation is everlasting love and won't renounce it for family, friends, other suitors, plus twenty-two proofs that the man is a scoundrel; and the plot they share is a glacially slow progress of the obvious (though, as usual in Trollope, each incident taken by itself is reasonable and engaging). But there's more. The other main plot of the novel considers the Duke of Omnium as Prime Minister. This plot, too, advances with glacial slowness as it presents—over the long span of time and with the density and minute variations of detail that such a large, deliberate action requires—the history of a parliamentary government: the question is what, after all, could be duller in a novel than to examine the favoring circumstances, the crisis, the grasping of the opportunity, the triumph and consolidation, the signs of instability as personal ambitions begin to diverge, the miscalculations and bad luck, the defects of temperament, the gradual and unimpedable erosion, and at length the long foreseen and long delayed collapse? yet here the slowness is right, inevitable, careful, affecting, and particularly appropriate to the complicated, self-tortured, inarticulate nature of the Duke himself. It needs to be added that even Plot No. 1, mostly a bore, comes to an astonishing climax: the great scene, reported as from an astronomical distance by an all-seeing observer, in which the scoundrel, plainly not quite resolute till the final moment, throws himself at last from a railway station platform into the path of a train.³

³ "It has recently been discovered," says Pope Hennessy (p. 331), though he doesn't say by whom or how or when or where, "that Tolstoy read *The Prime Minister* whilst he was writing *Anna Karenina*. He called it 'a beautiful book.' Lopez's suicide under a railway train at Tenby Junction may indeed have sealed Anna Karenina's fate, suggesting to Tolstoy a new and horrifying form of sudden death." But it is certain that Anna's fate was already sealed, though the triple coincidence (the virtually identical suicides, the virtual simultaneity of the books, Tolstoy's happening on the other while writing his own) is startling to say the least. *The Prime Minister*, finished in 1874, was published in installments between November 1875 and June 1876; published complete, in two volumes, in May 1876. *Anna Karenina* was first published in installments beginning January 1875; Tolstoy finished the novel on April 15, 1877. It is therefore certain that Trollope could not have seen *Anna Karenina* before completing *The Prime Minister*. (There is indeed no evidence that he ever heard of Tolstoy.) It is equally certain that Tolstoy could not have read *The Prime Minister* before he had clearly prefigured, in sections of *Anna Karenina* already published, the circumstances of Anna's death: Chapter XVIII of Part I (published in February 1875) already foreshadows Anna's death—a man commits suicide by throwing himself under the train from which, arriving at the railway station in Moscow, Anna makes her entrance (she herself says, "It's a bad omen") into the novel. Moreover, at least four years before there is any likelihood at all of Tolstoy's having got hold of a copy of

Pope Hennessy finds *The Prime Minister* altogether a bore; and perhaps the best that can be said of his chronic biliousness is that he's not a Trollopian, beaming imperviously on all the many sacred volumes as he constructs maps and genealogies of the master's imaginary provinces. Much of the book is given over to discussions of most of Trollope's work: the discussions tend to be rather brusque, but—except when they founder on some such spiky aesthetic reef as Trollope's working habits—sensible and judicious without necessarily persuading us that *The Vicar of Bullhampton* also is altogether a bore or that *The Small House at Allington*, characteristic and unremarkable Trollope, is the "supreme work of his art" or the stagy and solemn Madame Max Goesler in any way comparable to the perverse, fearless, sentimental, witty, unladylike, heartbroken, matchmaking, troublemaking, loyal, superb, and incomparable Lady Glencora ("the most winning and entertaining of any of Trollope's women—with the possible exception of Madame Max Goesler").

Pope Hennessy is effective and sympathetic on Trollope's early life and on his family, especially his redoubtable mother, the celebrated Fanny Trollope, author of *Domestic Manners of the Americans*. Mrs. Trollope began writing at the age of fifty as the family's sole provider and, nursing her brood of consumptives most of whom died over a period of a few years, kept writing on a schedule as regular as her son's till she had published one hundred and fifteen volumes (Trollope notes in the *Autobiography* that she, his historian brother Tom, and Trollope himself wrote "more books than were probably ever before produced by a single family"). What, however, makes Pope Hennessy's book a (somewhat qualified and crotchety) success is his talent—the biographer's indispensable talent—for choosing the right quotations; this one, for example, from *The Kellys and the O'Kellys*, Trollope's second novel (written in 1847), in which the young hero enjoys a typical meal aboard the canal-boat from Dublin:

He made great play at the eternal half-boiled leg of mutton, floating in a bloody sea of grease, which always comes on the table

The Prime Minister, Tolstoy had interested himself in an event that his biographers and critics have always considered the event that "sealed Anna Karenina's fate": "The description of Anna's dead body in the shed of the station yard in Chapter 6 of the last part is autobiographical in the sense that, according to a note in . . . [Countess Tolstoy's] diary, Tolstoy himself had witnessed such a scene. The woman, who was called Anna, was a discarded mistress of one of Tolstoy's neighbors and she committed suicide by throwing herself under a train. Tolstoy, Sonia records, saw her after the post-mortem in the railway shed naked and with her skull and body cut open" (David Magarshack, Foreword to his translation of *Anna Karenina*, Signet, 1961, p. xv). The suicide occurred on January 4, 1872; Tolstoy saw the body the following day. Without divine assistance or conscientious scholarship, we may never know what led Pope Hennessy to draw such an inference (and add his own few knots to the tangled skein of literary history), since he doesn't let us check his source, and seems unaware of the public information about *Anna Karenina* against which his inference ought to be have been checked.

three hours after the departure from Porto Bello. He, and others equally gifted . . . swallowed huge collops of the raw animal and vast heaps of yellow turnips, till the pity with which a stranger would at first be inclined to contemplate the consumer of such unsavoury food, is transferred to the victim who has to provide the meal at two shillings a head. . . .

Or this one, from *Mr Scarborough's Family*, Trollope's forty-fifth novel (written in 1881), in which, recording some carefree talk between the honeymooners as they wander among the Alpine flowers, Trollope demonstrates that, even within the Victorian decorum, a great novelist is excluded from none of the secrets of intimacy, not indeed from the marriage-bed itself:

"Well, old girl!" he said, "and now what do you think of it all?"

"I'm not so very much older than I was when you took me, pet."

"Oh yes, you are. Half of your life has gone; you have settled down into the cares and duties of married life, none of which had been so much as thought of when you took me."

The husband is wearing "highlows" (hobnail boots), and he remarks that if he had worn them during his courtship she would have considered him "such an awkward fellow"—

"But now you must take my highlows as part of your duty."

"And you?"

"When a man loves a woman he falls in love with everything belonging to her. You don't wear highlows. Everything you possess as specially your own has to administer to my sense of love and beauty."

"I wish, I wish it might be so."

"There is no danger about that at all. But I have come before you on such an occasion as this as a kind of navvy. . . . And then there is ever so much more," he continued, "I don't think I snore."

"Indeed no! There isn't a sound comes from you. I sometimes look to see if I think you are alive."

Or this one, from *Miss Mackenzie* (written in 1864), invading the spinster's boudoir:

She got up and looked at herself in the mirror. She moved up her hair from off her ears, knowing where she would find a few that were grey, and shaking her head, as though owing to herself that she was old; but as her fingers ran almost involuntarily across her locks, her touch told her that they were soft and silken; she looked into her own eyes and saw that they were bright; and her hand touched the outline of her cheek, and she knew that something of the fresh bloom of youth was still there; and her lips parted, and there were her white teeth. . . . She pulled her scarf tighter across

her own bosom, feeling her own form and then she leaned forward and kissed herself in the glass.

Here is Trollope himself, at the age of forty-six, defending himself against a friend's charge that he rates the joys of courtship above the joys of marriage:

As to myself personally, I have daily to wonder at the continued run of domestic & worldly happiness which has been granted me;—to wonder at it as well as to be thankful for it. I do so, fearing that my day also of misery must come; for we are told by so many teachers of all doctrines that pain of some sort is man's lot. But no pain or misery has as yet come to me since the day I married; & if any man should speak well of the married state, I should do so.

But I deny that I have done other. There is a sweet young blushing joy about the first acknowledged reciprocal love, which is like the bouquet of the first glass of wine from the bottle—It goes when it has been tasted. But for all that who will confuse the momentary aroma with the lasting joys of the still flowing bowl. May the Bowl still flow for both of us, and leave no touch of headache.

At the age of fifty-eight Trollope, suffering the promised day of misery, discloses to a friend that he has gone deaf in one ear:

I fancy I am going to be run over, and everybody seems to talk to me on the wrong side. I am told that a bone has grown up inside the orifice. Oh dear! One does not understand at all. Why should any bones grow, except useful, working bones? Why should anything go wrong in our bodies? Why should not we be all beautiful? Why should there be dread?—why death?—and, oh why, damnation?

And at sixty-seven, in the last year of his life, he denies that men grow old:

I observe when people of my age are spoken of, they are described as effete and moribund, just burning down the last half-inch of the candle in the socket. I feel as though I should still like to make a "flare-up" with my half-inch. In spirit I could trundle a hoop about the streets, and could fall in love with a young woman as readily as ever; as she doesn't want me, I don't—but I could!

(For the past twenty years there had been just such an unattainable young woman in his life, the beautiful American Kate Field, whom in the language of love he acknowledges, without naming her, on one of the last pages of the *Autobiography*. They could be, and were, friends; and she and his wife were friends too.)

One quality of the man not plausibly deducible from his writing was his noisy and unsettling physical presence. At the dinner party where he met for the first time Thackeray, G. H. Lewes, and the painter

John Millais, Trollope spent a blustery evening "contradicting everybody, then trying to mend the damage he had done by friendly words," as well as (according to the journalist George Augustus Sala) "'going to sleep on sofas, chairs, or leaning against sideboards, and even somnolent while standing erect on the hearthrug.'" (Such catnapping, whatever its social consequences, no doubt made it easier for him to rise briskly at five every morning ready for hard labor.) "Sala had never before met anyone 'who could take so many spells of "forty winks" at unexpected moments, and then turn up quite wakeful, alert, and pugnacious. . . .'" On his second visit to the United States, in 1868 (he was on official post-office business), he attended a dinner together with James Russell Lowell, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Lowell's account of it is "our best, indeed our only, account of what an attempt to converse with Anthony Trollope was like":

Dined the other day with Anthony Trollope; a big, red-faced, rather underbred Englishman of the bald-with-spectacles type. A good roaring positive fellow who deafened me (sitting on his right) till I thought of Dante's Cerberus. He says he goes to work on a novel "just like a shoemaker on a shoe, only taking care to make honest stitches." Gets up at five every day, does all his writing before breakfast, and always writes just so many pages a day. He and Dr Holmes were very entertaining. The Autocrat started one or two hobbies, and charged, paradox in rest—but it was pelting a rhinoceros with seed-pearl.

DR. You don't know what Madeira is in England?

T. I'm not so sure it's worth knowing.

DR. Connoisseurship with us is a fine art. There are men who will tell a dozen kinds, as Dr Waagen would know a Carlo Dolci from a Guido.

T. They might be better employed!

DR. Whatever is worth doing is worth doing well.

T. Ay, but that's begging the whole question. I don't admit it's *worse* doing at all. If they earn their bread by it, it may be *worse* doing (roaring).

DR. But you may be assured—

T. No, but I mayn't be asshorred. I don't intend to be asshorred (roaring louder)!

And so they went it. It was very funny. Trollope wouldn't give him any chance. Meanwhile, Emerson and I, who sat between them, crouched down out of range, and had some very good talk, with the shot hurtling overhead. . . . I rather liked Trollope.

Pope Hennessy pays tribute, often, to Trollope's powers of precise observation. "An intelligent Dublin lady, who knew Anthony Trollope well in these earliest Irish days, used reminiscently to say that

'his close looking into the commonest objects of daily life always reminded her of a woman in a shop examining the materials for a new dress'; and Trollope precisely vindicates the image as, writing about the United States thirty years after his mother's book, he describes the wealthy and fashionable New York woman dragging the long train of her expensive dress behind her over the unspeakable pavement "where the dogs have been, and chewers of tobacco, and everything concerned with filth except a scavenger." Ten years later, passing through Salt Lake City, he decided to call on Brigham Young (and records the encounter in a passage of the *Autobiography* that, unaccountably, Pope Hennessy doesn't use):

He received me in his doorway, not asking me to enter, and inquired whether I were not a miner. When I told him that I was not a miner, he asked me whether I earned my bread. I told him I did. "I guess you're a miner," said he. I again assured him that I was not. "Then how do you earn your bread?" I told him that I did so by writing books. "I'm sure you're a miner," said he. Then he turned upon his heel, went back into the house, and closed the door. I was properly punished, as I was vain enough to conceive that he would have heard my name.

Evidently Trollope's market didn't extend as far as Salt Lake City.

He wrote so much that he was afraid of flooding the market, and made a point of staying ahead of himself with several completed manuscripts locked away in his desk. He wrote till he died, and at his death there was enough on hand in the desk to supply the unsaturated market with a year or two of Trollope titles. Trollope would have been pleased.

PATRICIA MEYER SPACKS

Fiction Chronicle

WHILE THE AUTOBIOGRAPHER BY HIS CHOICE of literary form admits his awareness that he is the center of the universe, the novelist usually pretends fundamental concern with a world outside himself, invented to deny solipsism. The novel is particularly well-equipped to deal with the perplexing connections between inner and outer worlds, the ambience in which we live. Some novelists, though, choose the disguise of autobiographer or Boswellian journal-writer, which may provide dangerously simple solutions to their writing problems, making self-obsession a primary principle of art.¹ First-person fiction seems easy: it can substitute intimacy for ultimate suspense, its unity is automatic, its form that of the posing self. It can start anywhere, end any time, say anything. Yet this apparent ease is its treachery, for the novelist who embraces it for its lack of restriction may sink in a morass of self-indulgence, and the self indulged in such a case is not fictional.

In Alberto Moravia's latest novel the narrator's problem is his "sexual organ . . . absolutely exceptional both as regards proportions, sensitiveness, readiness, potency and resistance." Wishing to be a film director, he believes that his sexuality interferes with his art. Finally his wife leads him by the penis to her bedroom: happy ending. The 350-odd pages preceding this dénouement offer titillation but no consummation; they offer also endless introspection, with no indication that a more discerning creator has formed the thoughtless maunderings of the central character. The narrative's monotony is overwhelming. Defining himself as a "desublimite," Rico is unable ever to get beyond his definition; the novel's form is that of successive events and the protagonist's interpretations of them, but every interpretation is identical. The author's apparent unawareness of his character's stupendous dullness leads to speculation that the dullness is his own. Although abundant superficial detail about external actuality fills the novel's pages, the detail reflects no perception. Both the inner and the outer world seem unreal; both deadeningly shallow. The book's lack of intellectual and formal discipline, its air of recording whatever comes to mind, its smug seriousness about its reductive delineation of a male problem—all suggest Mo-

¹ TWO: A PHALLIC NOVEL, by *Alberto Moravia*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. \$7.95. MEMOIRS OF AN EX-PROM QUEEN, by *Alix Kates Shulman*. Knopf. \$6.95. THE BRIDE WORE THE TRADITIONAL GOLD, by *Talbot Spivak*. Knopf. \$5.95. THE LIZARDS, by *Alessandra Lavagnino*. Harper & Row. \$5.95. THE DEAD OF THE HOUSE, by *Hannah Green*. Doubleday. \$5.95.

ravia's failure to define his character as an autonomous entity. His hero is, in effect, merely a manner of speaking.

The precise equivalent, from a female point of view, is *Memoirs of an Ex-Prom Queen*—equally superficial perception, equally annoying prose. The same self-satisfied air of revelation dominates this relentless record of trivia, implicitly justifying itself by the dictum that trivia, after all, compose most women's lives; if the novel is boring, blame society. Sasha Davis doesn't like her husband, he won't take her seriously. She likes herself quite a lot as a decorative object, although she claims the standard problems of self-esteem. She leaves her husband in Spain, wanders about Europe, recalls the events of her past life (with stress on the degree to which she has been misused by men), returns to her husband in New York, has babies, feels unfulfilled, gets a haircut. Her husband seems to be losing interest, as well he might, though he's pretty much a nothing himself. Her final act is to telephone her feminist friend Roxane, who has earlier brought some life to this tedious book with her report on how she plagues her husband while accumulating the wherewithal to divorce him: a raw egg in his lunchbox is her best stroke. Sasha's picking up the telephone is a less remarkable image than Rico's being led off by his prick, but the point is roughly the same: who knows what's going to happen next? Ambiguity! Unreal, though, since nothing that happens is likely to make any difference—it's impossible to care.

In both these novels, commitment to an imagined consciousness badly backfires. We tend to assume, in our post-Freudian era, that the interiors of all minds are interesting. When a novelist's delineation of a psychic interior reveals nothing beyond the character's self-love, when no fictional control implies judgment or understanding of psychic inadequacy, we lose belief in the authenticity of the consciousness depicted and start to yearn for more expressed awareness of exteriors. The hollowness of these books reverberates oddly. They demand that readers take seriously the plight of negligible human beings, but reveal that negligibility on such a scale makes seriousness impossible. Apparently predicated on the assumption that the unexamined life is not worthy of man or woman, they suggest finally that self-investigation and its opposite may be identical. Lack of reticence, lack of discipline (moral, psychological, artistic) come to seem much the same as lack of spontaneity and expressiveness, paralyzing the responsive imagination.

The Bride Wore the Traditional Gold, a first novel, is less distasteful than these two productions of more practised writers, but lack of discipline seems once more the problem. Some genuine comic invention redeems the narrative from pervasive self-pity. Jason Chambert, who tells his own story, is an uninspired would-be writer whose main claim to interest is his marriage to an Indian beauty.

Devi professes to have six toes on one foot and to be a champion swimmer; neither profession is true. She is not to be trusted: she has love affairs and lies about them. The couple live in Cambridge, England, then on a farm in Iowa; Jason wins immense academic popularity teaching pharmaceutical Latin to hordes of students; he avoids the army, takes care of his cats, contemplates his life while lying in the mud under attack by angry pigs, leaves the farm, has a vision of his ancestors and his wife's, returns to the farm. He keeps track of his experience by recording it in notebooks. The notebooks link him to reality, and remind him of how bizarre reality can be. Yet even commonplace reality defies rendition.

It rained heavily that afternoon as the afternoon stretched into evening and our bedroom darkened. It was an afternoon to remember. To shine brightly through the years ahead, to light up those behind. Impossible to describe.

Jason produces many typed pages, but they may consist only of the repeated names of Devi's relatives: "Pranab Bhattacharya" is a good way to fill up space.

Jason is capable of irony at his own expense; that helps. His psyche has more dimensions than Moravia's Rico or Alix Shulman's Sasha, hence more density. But his memories lack authority. The pigs, the cats, the other people who inhabit the narrative are palpable inventions offered as fragments of actuality. (Jason's intermittent telephone conversations with John Wayne about his problems with the draft are particularly odious instances of fantasy presented as fact.) The novel, calling attention to the inherent difficulties of writing, does not solve them; both character and author "fill up space" with a conspicuous lack of responsibility to the believable, to the complexity of human interaction, the texture of experience. Though the suffering of the aspiring writer and the comedy of wry invention are convincing, neither has meaning beyond itself.

But the problems of first-person narrative are not insoluble. The narratives of self-revelation that seem to issue from and speak to the vital imagination are marked by their air of restraint. Understatement can be as clichéd as its opposite, but one must welcome a book that limits its opportunities for self-indulgence, assuming that in private as well as public life surfaces may suggest interiors more accurately than mindless introspection, and that form means more than starting somewhere and stopping some arbitrary distance further on. Two comparably compelling examples of fictional reminiscence are *The Lizards*—about an inarticulate Italian girl with an efficient lawyer mother—and *The Dead of the House*, a tale of a young American girl and her relation to a complex family tradition. In a prefatory note, Hannah Green comments explicitly on the

novelistic relation between fiction and fact: "I got the idea from life, but I have proceeded from vision. I have made use in equal parts of memory, record, and imagination." The intimate mystery of memory is the source of the book's power. Green's episodes have the air of being recalled, not created, and they conquer the imagination as one's own memories do, true both to the consciousness that recalls them and to an imaginable world outside that consciousness. "Memory, record, and imagination," closely linked in experience, are often indistinguishable from one another. So it is in *The Dead of the House*, where the creative power of the imagination operates on fact to generate memory, which in turn makes imagination inseparable from fact.

"Memory," in this novel, is both individual and collective, existing in the minds of the family as a whole as well as in the narrator's consciousness. It is a formative power. Listening to family reminiscences, Vanessa comments: "I felt as if I were beautiful. I felt as if I were growing, harmonizing, settling into a form filled long ago in turn by these women, my great-grandmother and her daughter." Reminiscence creates both the old form and its new content, shaping and expanding the personality of the listener. It may be in detail inaccurate: Vanessa recalls that her sister won the pearl in their father's oyster, Lisa remembers Vanessa as winner. But the pearl's possessor is irrelevant. That the sisters recall events differently helps to define their natures. Memory, creating character, generating truth, is the subject and technique of the book. Its benignity incorporates misunderstanding, hostility (Lisa confessing that she always hated her sister), violence, death, without sentimentalizing them. When it avoids direct recollection of emotion, the avoidance is itself a statement.

"Good-bye, Vanessa. You're swell," he said, and hung up, and three weeks later, out in the Pacific where he stood on the deck of his ship, he was hit by a shell. He was buried at sea, May 7, 1944. I shut the door of my room; I drew down the blinds and doubled over.

Mama was home from the draft board. I heard her outdoors in the drive talking to Helen Foster.

"And Derek Monroe, his uncle whom he was named for, was killed in France in the *First World War*," Mama said, an awful pleasure wincing in her voice.

The naive sentence structure and vocabulary, the reportorial detail, intensify the reader's awareness that the narrator—not at all naive, by no means merely a reporter—fails to state her own feelings at a crucial moment. The complexity and intensity of her intolerable emotion are suggested by the girl's actions and by the unstated effect

of her mother's "awful pleasure." The interstices of memory are as revealing as its densities. *The Dead of the House* offers remarkable variety of emotional texture within its prevailing atmosphere of nostalgia.

The atmosphere of *The Lizards* is less readily definable. Marzia, the narrator, is unhappy with her individual memories, and collective memory is not available to her. Unlike Vanessa, Marzia cannot feel herself as belonging to a context. Her truncated family—father long dead, no siblings—provides no security. The conflict between her and her mother, freshly and sharply perceived as the novel's center, derives from her sense of inferior competence, at life and at love. Her mother's relationships are not erotic, but she lives in a web of affections, functioning in her widowhood as effective lawyer (her daughter rejects this career) and valued friend. As Marzia confronts her mother's fatal illness, she understands: "her life had been fuller and more worthy, more true and good than mine had been." She castigates herself for her failures of love and of communication, believes herself unworthy of love. Words seem both salvation and nemesis: "all my life I had pursued only words, desiring only them, idolizing them; and I had hated other people because I couldn't talk, I had loved them because I couldn't talk; because of my stammer . . . I had left my mother alone." She writes letters to Diego, who loves her, but never mails them: "memories, desires, dreams, vague and precise images: finally they became words." Her mother dies, she feels unable to continue her relationship with Diego; going to his apartment to renounce him forever, she sees sculptured lizards on a facade, and—for reasons complex and mysteriously convincing—her life turns round, possibility opens.

Memories becoming words: here is the subject of this novel as of Hannah Green's. In *The Dead of the House* the first term of the equation seems most significant; in *The Lizards*, the second. But these are not novels which feed upon themselves. Their concern with velleities leads outward, distinguishing their authors from more self-indulgent practitioners of novelistic art who use their novels only to record unconvincing states of mind. Discipline implies acceptance of something outside the self. The danger of fictional autobiography is that it may allow the novelist to avoid the pressure of the actual; if he imagines another consciousness only as a vehicle for his own dreams or nightmares of self-love and persecution he may drain from it all power of fictional conviction. It is hard to believe in the psyche or the experience of Rico and Sasha; one doubts Jason's experience if not his psyche; Vanessa and Marzia are convincing because imagined in the context of a compelling world.

The comic novel bears a peculiarly complicated relation to "the

real world."² Its obsessive theme these days seems to be its characters' efforts to convert fantasy into fact. This is a hallowed comic subject (Volpone the classic example of the theme), but the fantasies have a new ugliness and the movement toward reconciliation which used to define comedy is now ambiguous indeed. What other novelists only aspire to is achieved by Muriel Spark, whose *Not To Disturb*, almost skeletal in structure, is a Bergsonian comedy which maintains a delicate poise just this side of sheer horror. The on-stage cast of characters (it's a novel written like a play) consists mainly of a group of servants in an outrageously upper-class household. They wait: for a dénouement which they anticipate, which they might prevent but have not caused, the death by murder and suicide of their employers and the private secretary sexually involved with them. Their waiting is not a state of being but an action. All their plans have long been laid, journalists lurk in the wings to receive their stories as soon as those stories have value, they know already how they will place their profits. One new fact comes to their attention in the novel's course: the heir to the baron's fortune turns out to be the sex maniac long confined in the attic. It is a fact readily incorporated into the servants' schemes. Down comes "him in the attic" in his zippered jumpsuit inadequately secured by a padlock, up steps an already pregnant parlor maid, a convenient visiting parson performs the nuptials, the bridegroom rips away his zipper and attempts to rape his bride in the corner. But nothing so real as rape is allowed. On the other hand, the two murders and the suicide do occur on schedule, and just off stage a bolt of lightning kills the bizarre couple who have been wandering the grounds vainly attempting to substantiate their sense that something fishy is going on.

Such is the restoration of order in Muriel Spark's comic world: the death of intruders, who are "right" in their assessment of the situation; the death of the traditional guardians of wealth; the marriage of besotted nobleman to corrupted servant. At the very end, a visiting prince glows at the illusory possibility that tragedy may produce for him a ready-made household staff. The staff, of course, have grander plans; but one of their number is willing to marry the prince, who is, in turn, willing enough to marry her: she is "quite the most attractive. A very good little cook, too." "Order," in short, is very like what used to be called chaos. It depends not on the established assumptions of society but on the realized fantasies of a single mind—that of Lister, the master butler, who presides over all the arrangements, lending to such improvisations as the two marriages an aura of inevitability. At his behest men and women behave like

² NOT TO DISTURB, by Muriel Spark. Viking. \$5.00. THE PROSELYTIZER, by D. Keith Mano. Knopf. \$6.95. COLONEL MINT, by Paul West. Dutton. \$6.95. END ZONE, by Don DeLillo. Houghton Mifflin. \$5.95. MAGOG, by Andrew Sinclair. Harper & Row. \$6.95.

clockwork; it seems the only way to behave. Their unrelenting self-interest is an aspect of their mechanization, eerily real, eerily unreal. The servants loosen the heavy shutters to create appropriate sound effects; God provides the storm that bangs them, seeming thus, like prince and parson, only one more agent of Lister.

Moral judgment is irrelevant to this weird microcosm. On the other hand, the novel in its comic assertion implies large moral perception—and that one can use such terms suggests the magnitude of its achievement despite the apparent smallness of its claims. The large perception concerns the place which fantasy has assumed in contemporary lives. Those journalists in the wings make everything happen. They pay for fantasy, if only it can be formed to look like fact; and it can, if it is to be paid for. The existence of a market creates the tragedy; and the reader fails to feel it as tragedy because he is so fully absorbed in the entrepreneurial perspective of the lower class witnesses. The servants, inadequately human in their expressed emotions, do not engage our human sympathies; they engage our interest in spectacle, suspend our capacity for empathy, make us, too, eager for the drama which will create newspaper excitement. Laughing at them we laugh at ourselves (as we do with all good comedy); laughing at ourselves, we learn.

But what a dark fable to learn from! The novel teems with inverted references to *The Tempest*, in which Prospero's machinations and the storms he raises lead the action's human participants to benign ends, and to fuller realization of their experience's meaning. In *Not To Disturb*, the characters learn only the exactness of their calculations. Volpone and Mosca are forcibly corrected by society; Lister and Irene are rewarded. The reader's "learning" consists in the revelation that the world he inhabits and imagines and peruses in his newspapers is as grotesque as that of the Gothic novel; and Spark's comic vision, darker than that of satire, implies no hope of reform.

But it tells us something about ourselves and our society, for all its pretence to be stylized out of all relation to ordinary reality. Lesser comic novels fail to relate the extravagances of the imagination to those of the external world. Two cases in point are *The Proselytizer* and *Colonel Mint*, both purporting to offer social commentary, neither succeeding. *Colonel Mint* provides a pleasant donnée: an astronaut in action sees an angel and says so. Most of the novel concentrates on the torments subsequently invented to force him to recant. One can surmise why the author might have thought it funny: long ago men suffered for their divergences from religious faith; now the state's destruction of deviants is as certain as the Inquisition's; such parallel and reversal is the stuff of comedy. . . . Dr. Johnson once remarked of John Ogilvie's poems, "Why, Sir, there is in them what *was* imagination, but it is no more imagination

in *him*, than sound is sound in the echo." Paul West provides echoes of ideas, an echo of comedy: what is supposed to be funny is more often horrifying, because of the detectable relish with which sadism is elaborated. The author's control is tenuous; one learns nothing. D. Keith Mano is even worse: more long-winded, almost equally sadistic, just as meaningless. He provides a fuller plot, involving a pious lecher who seduces women for the glory of God and banishes them to missionary work in Brazil once he's bored, having first recorded their sexual exploits on film. This is supposed to be an "extravagant comic novel," but the experience of reading it is simply depressing. For one thing, there's the quality of the prose: "I know who you think I am. A handy man, that's all. Husband, father—dead from the neck up. But I'm more than that. Shit, shit, yes. You want me to be like all the rest of them." And the quality of the mind behind it, manipulative, exploiting the sensational, apparently devoid of serious thought.

To require novels to *educate* means to want them to offer the sort of reference outside themselves that makes *Not To Disturb* live in the mind. *End Zone*, confined in ostensible subject to the experiences of a fairly good football player on the team of an unknown college, achieves at least spasmodically an authentic sense of microcosm. Its comic intensity derives largely from its confinement of reference and concern: can the team win its big game? can the protagonist's roommate stop wetting his bed? should Gary sign up for ROTC? Like Gulliver among the Lilliputians, we chuckle at the pettiness of it all; like Gulliver we find ourselves surprisingly confronted by some immediate issues. The problem of language as a medium of communication, for instance. Gary complains—he is talking specifically about the vocabulary of nuclear apocalypse, a subject which intermittently obsesses him—that words "don't explain, they don't clarify, they don't express. They're painkillers." Around him, people talk in clichés (which DeLillo strings together with a verve altogether missing in Mano): "Speaking just from the football angle and from all I could gather from the various sources I've been in touch with around here, it's frankly pretty obvious that you know how to comport yourself in every aspect of the game." Language has become an inadequate medium for realizing fantasy, fantasy itself is all too likely to focus on unthinkable disaster. Football is the solution: mindless despite its paraphernalia of plotting, offering physical release and a sense of community, filling up the time, replacing decision. It is not important that it resembles war, the author reminds us in a Fieldingesque narrative interruption: after all, we have real wars to occupy us. What matters is that it's a version of life: like Beckett characters we must always find something to give us the illusion that we exist.

This, too, is dark comedy, slipping toward something not comic

at all. It tells us once more of a disordered dream-world; and as Gary's black teammate says, "It's easy to fear objects in dreams." Gradually all becomes fearful. The novel ends, inconclusively, with Gary's high fever, a final response to chaos, in which fragments of order exist only in individual visions—the Jewish football player, for example, trying to imagine away his Jewishness—and the order created by one mind seems madness to its neighbor. Heroism consists in the knowledge that defeat is the human condition; as the hero succumbs, the crazy world he inhabits no longer seems funny. *End Zone* lacks the clarity of intent, the economy of tone and detail, that give *Not To Disturb* its brilliant penetration; but it creates (along with a certain amount of clumsy plot-filling) the consciousness-raising that only art can give.

More ambitious, less successful, is *Magog*, in which the protagonist's realized fantasies encompass global industrial empires. Gobbling great hunks of time, a vast *dramatis personae*; tossing off puns, inside jokes, bits of mythology; insisting that the life of a man and of an empire have much in common, the book trivializes all it touches. There is a strange discrepancy between its apparent breadth of concern and the confinement of its self-congratulatory displays of wit, its game-playing (rather good when a politician predicts that some day they'll sell London Bridge to be reconstructed in Arizona), its perfunctory dismissal of characters whose usefulness is past. All the talk of Israel and arms, movie machinations, apartment construction deals, rock festivals, peace rallies, the disintegration of Great Britain—all that announces up-to-the-minute relevance somehow suggests that the author has invented it all, that neither the British Empire nor the character of Magog—both given abundant crises and reactions to crisis—is more than a brief and unrevealing excursion of the imagination. The very inventiveness of the plotting contributes to an effect of claustrophobic self-absorption. Things keep happening, years pass in a page or so, nothing is taken seriously, nothing matters. It's funny sometimes, sometimes even sad, but the lack of sharp authorial perspective makes it seem purposeless—comedy without focus, a private joke, finally uninteresting, instantly forgettable.

The political novel is not at the moment a popular form.³ Com-

³ THE ORDEAL OF STANLEY STANHOPE, by Richard Bousquet. Norton. \$6.95. THE GERMAN LESSON, by Siegfried Lenz. Hill & Wang. \$8.95. FOREVER FLOWING, by Vasily Grossman. Harper & Row. \$6.95. THE MALCONTENTS, by C. P. Snow. Scribner's. \$6.95. THE TRIAL OF CHRISTOPHER OKIGBO, by Ali A. Mazrui. The Third Press. \$5.95

mitted to making sense of public as well as private experience, it demands a special kind of ambition. American novelists appear particularly reluctant to confront their public context; the one immediate example of what might be called an American political novel is an unqualified disaster. *The Ordeal of Stanley Stanhope* concerns a middle-aged, middle-class man who worries about how to reconcile his revulsion at his country's materialism with his theoretical patriotism. The answer—not that anyone could possibly care, given the terms in which the problem is defined—depends on Stanley's fantasies about a Revolutionary War hero, and on the revelations that come to him about the difference between fantasy and fact. The book's main fault, to put it bluntly, is lack of intelligence (though one might add, lack of imagination). Politics requires thought. Its horrors sometimes force writers away from intellection, into defensive day-dreaming; one might speculate that the sparsity of serious political reference in our current fiction is itself an index of our desperation. But the novelist who takes political actuality as his province must himself assume an ideological position or justify the refusal of ideology. *The German Lesson*, latest of the German novels about life among the Nazis, confronts the political and personal implications of "duty" and the relation between the artist and society: ambitious issues, squarely met.

"Do you know what seeing means? Seeing means penetrating and enhancing. Or inventing. In order to get your own likeness, you have to invent yourself, over and over again, with every glance. Whatever is invented turns into reality. . . . Seeing is also exposure. Something gets laid bare in such a way that nobody in the whole world can pretend he doesn't understand."

The speaker is Max Ludwig Nansen, an artist whose work is so threatening to the Nazis that they forbid him to paint. (He has recourse then to "invisible paintings": the local policeman first assumes they are a trick, then begins confiscating them.) The novel consists of a youthful narrator's efforts to "see" the truth of his past experience and its meaning in the context of national history. Inventing himself, he makes himself real; exposing his past, he forces the world to understand it. This individual act of seeing is a form of political defiance, asserting the autonomy and the primacy of imagination and memory against the demands of a system which would deny familial bonds (the narrator's brother is a "traitor" because he has shot himself in the hand) and the power of art.

Representing the counter-case to Nansen's individualism is the policeman, whose devotion to duty frees him from doubt. Sigg, the narrator, remembers him vividly: that policeman is his father. The boy, confined in a reformatory for "rescuing" too many paintings,

writes copybook after copybook on "The Joys of Duty": *his* duty is to remember, his copybooks shape the novel. (Lenz, however, plays complicated games with literary form: the novel includes also the boy's comments on his copybooks and the explanations of a psychologist interested in his "case." One kind of seeing often conflicts with another; the reader must make sense of the juxtapositions.)

The experience of reading *The German Lesson* is partly of tedium. Because perceived detail is so vital to the preservation of reality (and to preserve reality is the fundamental political act, given a government which alters people's minds), the novel dwells obsessively on minutiae as seen by an individual—the look of a girl's thigh, the texture of stewed apples—private versions of the real. Minutiae can be boring. Yet their insistent presence dramatizes not only the difficulty but the monotony of political resistance; and its ultimate privacy. The individual dignifies the social and enables us to understand it. We empathize with men and women, not with movements; the individualism of the imagination persists. Lenz's Siggi and his associates are vividly realized in their separateness; the reader cares about them, not about the abstractions of Nazi justification; caring, he shares their experience of how abstractions help determine even close relationships. The book makes theoretical problems live as human dilemmas. Siggi protecting paintings, Pamela guarding her virtue: the meanings are different, the dynamics of response in some respects the same.

The importance of the personal as an index to the real becomes more apparent as one examines novels which neglect it. *Forever Flowing* is a complicated example. Ivan Grigoryevich, its protagonist, has suffered the archetypal fate of his generation: thirty years in an Arctic labor camp, during Stalin's regime and after. Returning to civilization, he finds himself alienated; his one viable relationship, with his landlady, ends soon with her death. Most of the second half of the novel consists of his reflections on the meaning of his fate.

The human situation of this man has almost automatic power over the imagination. The bare words, "thirty years in an Arctic labor camp," evoke so much history, so much suffering, involve the reader in his own political guilts and make him guiltily conscious of his good fortune in avoiding such a fate: part of the novelist's work is done already. The rest, unfortunately, never quite gets done at all; the alternate journalistic flatness and rhetorical insistence of Grossman's prose (at least in translation) may suggest why:

Like everything else that took place in the Soviet Union, this spontaneous wrath at the bloody enemies of the Jews was thought out ahead of time and planned in full detail. In exactly the same way, the elections to the Supreme Soviet were planned ahead of time in full detail by Stalin.

This is not the prose of fiction, but of argument. One may point to analogues in, for instance, George Eliot; but George Eliot's arguments, justifying the operations of her imagination, do not take its place. The purpose of *Forever Flowing* is to persuade: it is, in short, rhetoric. That rhetoric is often compelling, as in the accounts of permitted starvation, the exploration of possible judgments on a stool pigeon. But it is not compelling as a novel is compelling, it does not absorb the reader into a new form of life, it judges experience instead of rendering it.

The hero of *Forever Flowing*, observing that "the literature which called itself 'realistic' was just as formalized and imaginary as the bucolic romances of the eighteenth century," comments inadvertently on *The Malcontents*, a novel purporting to deal with civilization's present discontents, but so formulaic in structure, so unperceptive in selectivity, that it seems remote from any real concern. Like *Forever Flowing*, *The Malcontents* appears invented to prove a point: that old human needs find new forms. The plotting of contemporary political malcontents resembles that of Snow's Cambridge dons, and dons and revolutionaries demonstrate that longing for power and for love shapes the fates of nations and individuals. One can hardly dispute the thesis, but one can resent its presentation. The details of English life are right, the characters' psychologies make textbook sense, but all seems mechanical in the telling; and because mechanical, finally false. There is too much distance between teller and tale; the narrator is too palpably the manipulator of his own inventions. The effect is as disturbing as that of the uncontrolled merging of creator and created. Both extremes vitiate the novel's claim to reveal the real.

A final depressing case in point is *The Trial of Christopher Okigbo*, concerned with the struggle of Biafra. Again one is ready to be moved, and nothing happens. The action of this fable takes place in the after-life, and the drama, such as it is, centers on theoretical debate. Idea and emotion split apart, the novelist fails to communicate his passion, and the characters seem excrescences on a piece of fiction which isn't even good polemic. Its inadequacies emphasize once more the problem of the political novel: to be true to internal experience while stressing the external, to keep in touch with private feeling as well as public pattern—converse and corollary of the dilemma of fictional autobiography—finally, to be aware of both the inner and outer man.

The moral obligation to be fully aware is the subject of some of the most memorable fiction now being written.⁴ It is a covert theme

⁴ THE OPTIMIST'S DAUGHTER, by Eudora Welty. Random House. \$5.95. THE GOALIE'S ANXIETY AT THE PENALTY KICK, by Peter Handke. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. \$6.95.

of many novels, an open preoccupation of Eudora Welty's latest book. *The Optimist's Daughter* is an unlikely triumph, combining Chekhovian understatement with Faulknerian verve, displaying the author's powers at their best. She has lost nothing over the years: her unerring ear, the comic vitality of her characters, the authenticity of furniture and flowers and small-town mores remain compelling. And the profundity of her moral imagination has deepened. Little of obvious significance happens in this book. An old man dies, his daughter grieves, his young second wife feels an injustice has been done her (on her birthday!). There is a southern funeral, unexpectedly invaded by the wife's implausible relatives. The daughter, Laurel, returns to Chicago, where she works. She thinks about her own long-dead husband, and about what her marriage meant. What makes such events important is the penetration with which the characters are judged and the intensity with which they are loved.

Judge McKelva's widow, Fay, is by any standard a bitch, totally self-absorbed. She wishes everyone to admire her green shoes, she physically attacks her husband on his deathbed ("I was going to make him live if I had to drag him!") and informs his grief-stricken doctor that she'd always felt nature should be allowed to take its course, she begrudges Laurel even her dead mother's breadboard, defending her own property rights against all comers, she lies without scruple, claiming to be an orphan and asserting in the face of contradictory evidence her moral right to the claim. She learns nothing and seems incapable of learning. Welty exposes her pettiness and selfishness in excruciating detail, and exposes the cost of such weakness, to Fay herself and to others. But the author also achieves a loving understanding which transcends judgment and transforms the meaning of exposure. "Fay slept still. When Laurel had to touch her shoulder to wake her, Fay struggled and said, 'Oh no, no, not any more!'" Fay belongs to the future, not the past, as she proudly insists, because the past is pain. Her inability to embrace her memories or to grow through feeling is a moral inadequacy, but it is also a misery, and Eudora Welty demands that we respect the misery even while we condemn its effects.

Laurel, too, has her inadequacies: this unsentimental presentation of experience recognizes inadequacy's inevitability. But accepting the emotions that overwhelm her, she discovers how to use emotion as a means of awareness. The tie between feeling and perception is the subject of the book.

Fay was without any powers of passion or imagination in herself and had no way to see it or reach it in the other person. Other people, inside their lives, might as well be invisible to her. . . . She could no more fight a feeling person than she could love him. "I believe you underestimate everybody on earth," Laurel said.

Lacking the capacity to face her own experience, Fay belongs to "the great, interrelated family of those who never know the meaning of what has happened to them." Laurel—re-examining her intimate memories, demanding truth in the memories others offer about her father—does not. Memory and morality (morality is honesty, authenticity of feeling and relationship, morality is acceptance of the real) for her are closely linked. And, apparently, for Eudora Welty, whose gift for reproducing the cadence of individual speech, the ways a social setting shapes its inhabitants, the ludicrous conjunctions of the mind, demonstrates the meaning of awareness. Really to look at what is there, and what has been, is to come to terms with actuality without succumbing to it. The great achievement of the novel is identical with that of its central character.

Ah! the reviewer thinks: a really good novel at last. And starts looking for the implied generalizations. The novelist must be fully committed to the human? Must recognize the power of external and of internal reality? Must demonstrate a capacity for subtle discrimination, in language and perception? Must love as well as judge his characters? Then she encounters *The Goalie's Anxiety at the Penalty Kick*, and the tentative generalizations crumble: for here is another manifestly powerful novel, and in every obvious aspect of subject, technique, assumption it seems the opposite of Eudora Welty's.

Laurel and her creator wish to see and to say the truth. Bloch, the only sustained character in *The Goalie's Anxiety*, "had to keep his guard up against words that transformed what he wanted to say into some kind of statement." The "statement" he wishes specifically to avoid is about his murder of a young woman; but in a larger sense both he and Peter Handke successfully avoid substantial direct assertion about anything at all. They do so by providing multitudinous simple declarations about actuality, and then questioning the possibility of declaration.

He was here at the edge of the woods, the electric power shed was over there, the milk stand was over there, a field was over there, a few people were over there, he was there at the edge of the woods. He sat as still as he could until he was not aware of himself any more.

It's Sesame Street turned sinister: the distinction between "here" and "there" becomes impossible to make, finally awareness of the self disappears—as it does for Bloch at several crucial moments. Reality always threatens him, unreality threatens him more. Language terrifies him. Rising from bed, looking out the window, he thinks no longer in words but in hieroglyphs, reducing what he sees to the diagrammatic in an effort to deprive it of its power. The intolerable lies in wait:

In his room at the inn he woke up just before dawn. All at once, everything around him was unbearable. He wondered whether he had wakened just because at a certain moment, shortly before dawn, everything all at once became unbearable.

His hypothesis seems—is *made* to seem—a real possibility, as does the notion that a dropped glove has sinister meaning, or the fact that one man's coat hangs close to another's.

It's hard to talk about a book like this without being misleading. The plot itself is misleading: an ex-soccer goalie commits a murder and flees to a border town to avoid detection—but the kind of suspense the novel generates is not that of a thriller. The literary analogues are misleading: Kafka, Camus, Robbe Grillet—but the novel seems not derivative but totally fresh. One can talk of Wittgenstein and make it sound pretentious: it isn't. It is uneventful but gripping. Its central character has no depth, his endless reflections concern little beyond the look of things and the imagined meaning of appearances; yet the reader becomes totally absorbed in the operations of his mind. The prose consists of flat declarative sentences; its effect is as of poetry.

Beneath the dissimilarities of Welty's novel and Handke's lies an identity: both are committed to truth. The worlds they depict, as different as their ways of rendering them, are alike reflections of worlds we all know. Welty's fiction always concerns the clash of sensitivity with coarseness; Handke's makes sensitivity an unimaginable survival. But both writers in the intricacy of their selectivity (the source of their poetic energy) demonstrate the meanings of awareness. Welty shares awareness with her central character. For author and character, knowledge of actuality implies an attitude toward it—that compelling combination of judgment and love. The writer's sense of the actual is both social and psychological. She understands how custom shapes personality, and how personality defines itself around the edges of tradition; she knows how differently people see things and she glories in difference. Her relation to her creations is—is it sexism to say it?—almost maternal. Handke's connection to his characters is harder to describe. His "awareness" is far greater than Bloch's, which involves seeing a great deal, but almost always wrongly, attributing false significance to phenomena whose reality is their meaninglessness. Bloch's mind, declaring false meanings, denudes the world of true ones. Handke neither loves nor judges him, only presents him as contemplating subject and object of contemplation, a man devoid of real social context, defined not by his traditions but by his anxieties. Perceiving with precision the psychology of alienation, declaring nothing beyond his perception, Handke demonstrates as Welty does, with different material, the literary power of accuracy. His absolute knowledge of his character

creates authority which divides his novel from the mass of modish fiction apparently predicated on the assumption that to be boring is to make a comment on boredom. Probing boredom's roots, Handke is never boring. He offers an up-to-date variety of realism; and like Eudora Welty's more familiar kind it confirms and fulfills the reader's desire to be told both about the objective world and about how that world registers on the inner consciousness.

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VERNON YOUNG

The Emperor's New Prose

Fear was closing in on him. The Emperor had not enough air. He feared neither his wife nor his older sons, although any one of these, recalling the example set them by their gay grandmother and mother-in-law, could have stabbed him dead with a fork and taken his seat on the throne.

He feared neither the suspiciously jovial ministers nor the suspiciously glum generals. He feared not one out of all that rabble of fifty million squatting on the tussocks, the swamps, dunes and fields of his Empire, and which he simply could not picture in the mind's eye. He was not afraid of any of them, taken individually. But, taken all together, they were a sea, and in that sea he was drowning.

And he ordered moats to be dug, and outposts put up around his castle in St. Petersburg, and the drawbridge to be pulled up on chains. But even these chains could not be relied upon: the sentries on guard over them were men.

And, as the Great Wrath was turning into the Great Fear, the Chancellery of Criminal Offenses would buckle down to its work, and somebody would be hung up on the strappado by his arms, and under another body the floor would yawn, with master executioners awaiting him in the torture chamber below.

Therefore, whenever the sounds of abrupt, stumbling steps, now short, then prolonged, issued from the Imperial Chamber, all would exchange looks of dreary apprehension, and it was rare that anyone smiled.

The Great Fear was in the room.

The Emperor was on the prowl.¹

FOR RUSSIAN WRITERS, THE GREAT WRATH turned into the Great Fear between 1928 and 1934 when the armored doctrine of Socialist Realism was proclaimed. Henceforth, all men were to exchange looks of dreary apprehension and it was indeed rarely that anyone smiled. Yet there have been mystifying exceptions to the iron rule, as if to remind us that even in Hell logic does not prevail. Not only Tynyanov but also Prishvin, a non-political writer of nature stories, was left unmolested by the Central Committee, so was Konstantin Paustovsky, a nobly Chekhovian spirit who, while he published little fiction himself, never failed courageously to protest against censure of his fellow-writers. (His lovely, nostalgic story, "Rain at Dawn," can be found in Pomorska's Volume I). Mikhail Zoschenko, whose black-

¹ From "Second Lieutenant Likewise," by Yury Tynyanov (tr. B. G. Guerney) in *FIFTY YEARS OF RUSSIAN PROSE*, From Pasternak to Solzhenitsyn. Edited by *Krystyna Pomorska*. The MIT Press. 2 volumes. \$10.00 each. The ostensible subject of Tynyanov's story was the mad Czar Paul. Astoundingly, the man with the ears of a ferret and the jaw of a wolf failed to recognize his own portrait. Tynyanov escaped suspicion from the Kremlin and died in good odor.

humored talent rivalled that of Mandelstam, was denounced in 1946 (together with Akhmatova and Pasternak) for not embracing the canon of 1934 and died in 1958, unshriven, uncelebrated—but at least unchanged. And Boris Pasternak, as we know, continued to fortify his remote and oddly mystic position even after committing the cardinal error of publishing *Dr. Zhivago* outside Russia.² The case of Evgeny Zamyatin was not the least curious. To this day, his sweeping rejection of the future, *We*, written in 1920, has not been printed in Russia; after 1927, none of his literature was printed there. With enormous dignity and pluck he defended himself in a letter to Stalin and, through the intercession of Gorki, it is said, was permitted to leave the country in 1932.

Few have been as fortunate as this handful. The Great Fear has never wholly subsided: fear of being denounced as a “decadent formalist,” a “bourgeois Imperialist,” a “Westernizing revisionist.” Fifty years of Russian prose was purchased by one of the most irretrievable catastrophes in the history of social mankind. If we fail to recognize this, we shall be writing prefaces as imperturbable as those of K. Pomorska (by the way, the publishers don’t identify her and I don’t know if she’s Miss or Madam!). For at least forty years the Russian was reduced to the level of an animal in a compound; the fabric of his human relationships was torn to shreds; the movements of his limbs as well as of his mind were proscribed; his memory was placed out of bounds; he was forcibly cut off from all tributary influences outside his country; he was starved, tortured, shipped to Siberian camps, forced to grovel over every solecism his rebel tongue let slip; he died again by the million in a second war (the first having prepared his blind hopes and his nauseated disenchantment) and before recovering from this decimation he was again locked into submission at every level by fresh articles of prosecution bearing the old penalties of silence, imprisonment and death. The writers of *Soviet* prose, faced for forty years with irreducible tragedy, were denied the means of expressing the dimensions of that tragedy. Today, the writer in Soviet Russia, if not suffering from the excesses of “the great terror,” lives nonetheless in an atmosphere even more barren of options than that of the Twenties. The Revolution is behind him. Alienated, still, from Western Europe, and from personal links with his own deepest past, conditioned to a plebeian conformism and to a world of new objects without intrinsic value or

² The subtitle of this anthology, “From Pasternak to Solzhenitsyn,” is window-dressing, since Pasternak is represented solely by two perfumed sachets he wrote in the so-called Silver Age. In fact, K. Pomorska interprets a story by Pasternak which is not then included. I assume that last-minute copyright problems may have been involved; in which case, the publishers’ failure to give an explanation is flagrant discourtesy. As for Solzhenitsyn, dramatically silhouetted on the jackets, alternately with Pasternak; even if he were as good as the publishers and editress believe, 129 pages of him in a volume of 352 pages is conspicuously out of proportion.

historical patina, industrialized but not *urbanized*, he is virtually a man without a subject; his external world, organized for use and manipulated by a ring of men with iron masks, is a spectacle of cold banality and he is inhibited as much by the old *tovarich* cliché as by Party commandments from *internally* evaluating whatever contradictions may steal upon him in the hush of morning. Contemporary Soviet prose is predictably the sum of a despotic classless society, with very few exceptions doctrinaire, even in its rebellion, aesthetically seedy, spiritually blank, priggish and, above all—*above all!*—devoid of *psychology*.

A recurrent delusion of sentimental Anglo-Americans, and of other fellow-travellers, is that whenever a young Russian writes with critical heat about Soviet conditions he is thereby rejecting Communism and taking a giant stride towards the West. Nothing is further from probability—and God forbid that Russians should exchange their servitude for our criminal chaos; wisdom scowls on both. Our True Believers need to be reminded that impatience with the bureaucratic ethos, a marked feature of recent Soviet poems and stories (there are many prose examples in this collection), is no sign of radical skepticism towards the principles and structure of Russian Soviet society; it is merely a protest against remedial errors in the system. They need to be reminded, too, that when Pasternak was under fire for having had *Dr. Zhivago* published in Italy and for being offered the Nobel Prize, he *begged* Krushchev not to banish him to the West (comically enough, Krushchev didn't get around to reading the controversial novel until 1962!).³ They need to be further reminded that the publication of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, which initiated a *relative* loosening of controls in 1952, was primarily a gesture of political self-aggrandizement by Krushchev; only a few months later, the book was furiously attacked by reactionary critics and it was not long before Krushchev, himself, was vitiating his liberal decree with the same obscene prescriptions as those of the Leninism which had not surprisingly become Stalinism, couched in the familiar Philistine jargon of the sacrosanct "general line":

Socialist society through the Party as its guiding force removes obstacles hampering the normal life of the people and creates the necessary material, cultural and ideological prerequisites for the building of Communism.⁴

³ My authority is Peter Benno. Cf. "The Political Aspect" in *Soviet Literature in the Sixties*. An International Symposium edited by Max Hayward & Edward Crowley (London: Methuen, 1965). The nine essays in this slim volume comprise the most indispensable reading for all who have been too easily persuaded by the get-returns-quickly editors of Soviet Literature anthologies and by the literary-Red-Cross activity of the Swedish Academy.

⁴ From an address of March 8, 1963; quoted by A. Gaev in "The Decade Since Stalin." Cf. Hayward & Crowley, op. cit.

Miss Pomorska is prominent among those who could use these reminders, for she was content to terminate her Introductions with the conventional optimism assumed as a standard feature of editors who anthologize the Soviet arts. And she is as silent as the NKVD on the existence of Osip Mandelstam's *Fourth Prose*—or of his widow's ravaging memoir which, together with the 'fantasies' of "Abram Tertz"—i.e. Sinyavsky—(also ignored by our editress) constitutes the only *formidable* literature from Russia which, since the phony Thaw, has reached the West. Unwittingly, and despite omissions that demand more than a quibble, Pomorska's anthology does support an inescapable conclusion. With exceptions noted (above and to follow), the creative phase of so-called Soviet literature ended with the Twenties when the best writers, themselves murdered or silenced later, were beneficiaries not only of that international revolution of artistic idioms which they had been among the first to stage but also of the permanent sources in their own and in Western traditions of humanism. In effect, they were *anti-Soviet* or *a-Soviet*. Since a title announces an intention, "Fifty Years of Russian Prose"—not Russian *Soviet* prose—should have inspired the publishers with an opportunity for reprinting the incredibly neglected Ivan Bunin. His art would impose itself on the conscience if one were compiling "Fifty Years of *Worldwide Prose*." He would be immortal if he had written only "The Gentleman From San Francisco." The first Russian to be given the Nobel Prize for Literature, at a time when Swedish Academy members were fully dressed and in their right minds, Bunin was unmatched, save by Turgenev and sometimes Tolstoi, at evoking the fugitive beauty of women and the changing face of the Russian landscape.

If Bunin was excluded on the grounds that he was an emigré writer, it was scarcely consistent of the editor not to have also excluded Marina Tsvetaeva; on this occasion, I am delighted by her inconsistency. From the ill-starred poet's diary, of 1919, an essay on the subject of gratitude is in an authentic tradition of dissent, that aristocratic state of mind in which the subject is never so skeptical as when examining the nuances of his own candor—Montaigne, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Cioran.

I am never grateful to people for their actions, but only for their essence. Bread given me may appear to be an accident; a dream dreamed about me is always of the essence. . . .

An act is not an attitude; an attitude is not an evaluation; an evaluation (for example, an evaluation of Blok by his critics) is not the essence (of Blok himself). The essence is the intention, audible only to the ear. . . .

I eat your bread and despise you. Yes. Only self-interest is grateful. Only self-interest measures the whole (the essence) of things by

the piece it has received. Only an infantile blindness looks into the hand and affirms: "He gave me sugar, and so he is good." . . .

If we were to give to whomever we chose, we should be the lowest of scoundrels. We give to whoever wants. Hunger (will!) invokes our gesture (bread). Given, and forgotten. Taken, and forgotten. No ties, no connections. Once I have given, I have dis severed myself. Once I have taken, I have dis severed myself.⁵

(In these two volumes, the many translations by Helen Colacides—this is one—have exceptional merit.) Another invaluable item from the early period, salvaged by Pomorska, is Boris Pilnyak's "The Death of the Army Commander"; framed in beauty and animated at its core by pure menace, this is one of the most powerful short stories of modern Russian literature. Assuming that K. Pomorska banned Alexei Tolstoi and Sholokhov from her pages because they played traitor to their deepest convictions, we might applaud her moral indignation and forget about "extra-literary" judgments. Oddly, however, she extends clemency to Pilnyak, who as ignominiously defected from the integrity of his premises. Feeling the hot breath of Stalin on his neck, he reworked the story, "Mahogany," an extraordinary example of his black-and-gilded style, to fit the pro-Stalinist requirements he followed in *The Volga Flows into the Caspian Sea*. (To no avail; he was never forgiven the Army-Commander fable, died in a concentration camp and remains to this day, in Russia, an "unperson.") I doubt the wisdom of not acknowledging A. Tolstoi and Sholokhov as, at their best, authentic writers in the tradition of the epic Russian novel. Bunin, who knew Tolstoi as intimately as anyone did, and never ceased to deplore his chameleon character, nonetheless admitted that when writing his most genuine pages nobody knew "things Russian" better than he. As to Sholokhov, before he lost his nerve, he wrote memorable chapters on a great theme: the defeat of the earthbound man by the New Class with guts of smelted ore. These men are, in any case, indelible testimony to the opportunism or the torment of Russians haunted by the Great Fear. A ninety-page story, *Chocolate*, by A. Tarasov-Rodyonov, could not have conceivably been chosen to exemplify the editor's claim that her post-Revolution writers were united by their common intransigence toward the conventions of realism. She confesses, in fact, that she selected it mainly for its germinal expression (1922) of the Rubashov predicament in Koestler's *Darkness At Noon*. The kinship is all in Koestler's favor, the more so since Rubashov is a

⁵ Like Bunin and A. Tolstoi, Marina Tsvetaeva fled to Paris after the Revolution. Unlike Bunin, she foolishly returned to Russia, in 1939. Unlike Tolstoi, she had nothing to offer that the Soviet needed. Her husband, a former White army officer, was promptly executed; she was dispatched to the Eastern hinterland where, after abominable suffering, she committed suicide. She remained an "unperson" in Russia until 1962. This year, her collected poems, in English translation, have been published by Oxford University Press.

man of greater consequence than Comrade Zudin; but even if we restrict ourselves to Russian literary precedent, we can cite Alexander Ertel's short story about the private life of a Czarist police official ("A Specialist") as a far subtler social analysis, recited with greater economy. The ninety pages might better have been expended on writers inexcusably disbarred; Bunin, Gorky, Zoschenko, Tolstoi, Sholokhov.

Beginning with Nekrassov (that mediocrity unaccountably admired by young Russians and "liberal" Westerners), Pomorska's entries from the post-Stalin period are in the main so unremarkable that there is little point here in arguing over the relative merits of those familiar figures who have already been objects of critical chivalry, following from the principle that in the land of the blind the one-eyed is king: Yashin, Nagibin, Okudzhava, Aksyonov, Tondryakov—these are the usual nominations. Pomorska spares us the two last named; we are not grateful, however, for her substituting the stupendously tedious "Seryosha" (80 pages!), by Vera Panova, actually a survivor of the prewar generation. The attempt at child psychology displayed by this complacent story can best be considered *petit-bourgeois*; inevitably, I now realize, it became a movie during that smug New Red Wave of Soviet cinema around 1960. (I believe I walked out on the film.) Yuri Nagibin has a certain crude force when conveying life at the wilderness edge of society but his tone is one of didactic condescension and his muffled resentments never rise to the pitch of anger expressed by, for example, the Pole, Marek Hlasko (like Nagibin, he also writes about proletarians wrestling with the abstractions of Party dictatorship); nor do they ever fuse in such ferocious epigrams as Hlasko is capable of formulating.

The single figure of contemporary Russian fiction (apart from the clandestine "Tertz," noted above) who has, in my opinion, deservedly charmed the attention of Westerners is Yuri Kazakov, a disciple of Chekhov, by way of Paustovsky perhaps. He is represented in Pomorska by "On The Island," one of many variations on a single theme, an inconclusive encounter between a man and a woman in a far-North landscape. His most elaborate, troubled and magically pictorial version of the theme I've read is "Autumn in the Oak Forest."⁵ He writes in a minor key, attuned to the night aspects of nature; while he hasn't Chekhov's astonishing ability to efface himself—needless to say, he hasn't Chekhov's multi-level society at his disposal!—he does share the older master's appreciation of desolate settings and of the transient moment in which illumination comes too late to a man with more heart than will. The question arises: how long can a pragmatic and despotic regime, concentrated

⁵ See Thomas P. Whitney's impressively translated and edited collection, *The New Writing in Russia* (University of Michigan Press, 1964).

on material production and unanimity of allegiance, tolerate a Chekhovian in its midst? Notice has been given before that lyrical pessimism is quite as subversive as counter-revolutionary opposition.

The nature of *Soviet* prose is affirmed, lugubriously, by a story herein, "For the Good of the Cause." An expository passage is worth noting, in which a school-teacher, Lydia, meets her students in order to discuss a new building project frustrated by bureaucratic re-allocation. (The very subject chills the blood.) Since Lydia is not a prime mover in the story and the students are only a collective background, the writer's principal job was to block in the scene as unobtrusively as possible and get to the debatable point. Here is the kind of thing we read on one page:

Lydia, wearing a blue-green tailored suit and a black blouse, looked neat and trim. She had a friendly, open face. Standing on the landing outside the teachers' room, she studied the young people crowding around her from the narrow passage and stair case. . . . They all had happy, shining faces, and there was a buzz of excitement as they looked expectantly at Lydia. . . . None of the very young students were here. But even the oldest were not beyond that tender, impressionable age at which the best in them could be brought out. Their faces mirrored that special eagerness. It was the supreme reward of the teacher: students crowding around you like this. The minute Lydia came out of the room she was overwhelmed by those trusting eyes and smiles. . . . They could not have said what it was they saw in her. It was just that, being young, they responded to everything genuine.

If there are any Junior College teachers among my readers, I'd be curious to know if they'd give a C- to this prose if it arrived at their desk. And for anyone who believes I have gratuitously hunted for a dead horse to flog, I have news. The sentences quoted above—there are many, many more in the same context—were written by someone whose talent, according to K. Pomorska, and she's not alone with her assertion, is equal to that of Dostoevsky and Tolstoi! This talent was in fact honored with the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1970.

Admittedly, I have quoted Solzhenitsyn at his worst. But if he can write this badly, just how good is he at his best? Perhaps the translation is execrable; this would only account for the diction, not the inept narrative sequence and the mesmerized preoccupation with senseless detail. If you try reading *Cancer Ward* or *The First Circle*, in other translations, you will find the same plodding chronology, the same halting progress from one character to the other, from one clump of furnishings to the next. Solzhenitsyn is a very simple man to whom awful things have happened and these

experiences have marked him for life with literary monomania; from years in prison camps and hospitals he has emerged with a confinement complex: he can only imagine an enclosed situation. If he tries to handle the phenomena of a larger world he is then paralyzed by the Soviet ambience of equalitarianism in which you don't make distinctions, since distinctions are judgments. But literature *lives* on distinctions! He then returns to his original compulsion, pacing the cell or the ward, enumerating every crack in the wall, every bottle on the shelf, the color of a woman's blouse, the bare, stylized, flatly recorded secondary traits—fat or thin, sweet or sour, young and trustful, old and weary—all without subordination or discrete shadings. The Ivan Denisovich novel and a short story in Pomorska, "An Incident at Krechetovka Station," establish the limits of his skills, largely documentary, sustained by personal involvement with the material depicted. The short story in question recreates very convincingly a railroad outpost during the war, alternately boring and feverishly urgent, where lines of transport and the disposition of straggling, ill-fed, half-clothed regiments are impersonally controlled by telephonic communication with officials leagues distant from the front. But the *art* of the tale is blurred by delaying strategies. The essential "incident"—the betrayal of an innocent "straggler" (Solzhenitsyn, in reality) by an over-zealous Lieutenant in command of transport, occupies twenty pages. In order to establish the character of the Lieutenant, the author writes a preceding twenty-eight pages. Chekhov would have needed no more than three! *Matryona's Home*—the abject, persecuted life of a peasant woman in whose house the narrator was lodged—has often been defined by critics as a little masterpiece of compassion. They have forgotten Ivan Bunin's *Sukhodol* (the subject is comparable). Solzhenitsyn's compassion is that of a man looking down a long dark tunnel of time at a life the nature of which he has never known and is unequipped to imagine vividly. *Sukhodol* is the full, rich *experienced* version of a humble life in which cruelty, innocence, diabolism and the fragrance of lost autumns are consummately blended.

Recent Soviet Russian literature is a province of world literature. To make comparisons where they are pertinent, not unfairly reached for: while Russian poets of the last two decades have been numerically superior to the story-tellers, they have been inferior to the best Polish poets in the same period. And there has been no substantial prose fiction to put in the company of I. J. or I. B. Singer—certainly none to place confidently beside the Bosnian trilogy of Ivo Andrić. The perennial nightmare of Soviet Russian history may yet produce an unarguable successor to Kafka. Other prospects at the same level are less probable.

Report

Letter from England

IT MAY BE A DISAPPOINTMENT to readers of these Letters that I've not so far said anything about the theatre. The truth is that I don't go very often; I don't live in London, where most of the theatres are, and on the whole I'm not an instinctive theatre-goer. Other things being equal I prefer the cinema, and in my experience the kind of tedium one is liable to experience in the theatre is of a uniquely undesirable kind, scarcely balanced by occasional moments of satisfaction. Still, I don't want to knock such a venerable institution: I suppose my attitude to the theatre is like that of a reverent agnostic to organized religion. One can respect it as an ancient source of values, of profound historical and cultural significance, which still commands the allegiance of many good people; provided one isn't expected to, as it were, believe in it and actually go to church. But living only ten miles from Stratford-on-Avon I could scarcely avoid going a few times every season—if only *pour la forme*—to the performances at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre.

Stratford is still basically a pleasant Warwickshire market town, preserving close links with the surrounding agricultural community, and can be best seen as such on a fine day in winter. But in spring, summer and autumn it assumes a further role as one of the great tourist centres of Europe, an identity receiving its final seal from the Stratford Hilton, now nearing completion. Walking the streets on a fine summer evening, smelling the American and Continental cigarette-smoke, and hearing a hum of polyglottal voices all around, one has a strange sense that the local identity of the place has been abolished, and that one might be anywhere on the European tourist circuit. Tourism adds layer upon layer of *gemütlich* Englishry: the sacred name of Shakespeare is on everything, and his effigy is everywhere, as it might be at the shrine of some potent local deity. The whole place has rather the air of a stage set reflecting the charms of Olde England; the town is indeed full of genuine and very fine Elizabethan buildings, but they are kept in a state of almost unrealistically good preservation. The restorer's art is constantly applied, with a fine sense of cosmetic possibilities; look closely at the many Elizabethan houses, with their striking pattern of black beams and white walls, and you may find that the occasional extra beam has been painted on in order to heighten the visual effect. One of the greatest attractions is Anne Hathaways's thatched cottage, a couple of miles outside the town at Shottery. Two or three years ago it was badly damaged in a fire arsoniously started by a local youth who

had been crossed in love. Within a few months, however, it had been skilfully restored to look as good as new, or even better.

Though, of course, what "newness" would really mean for such a building, or for Stratford as a whole, or, indeed, for Shakespeare, is a hard question. It goes without saying that the present neat and clean and constantly repainted town, which so many foreign visitors must regard as a marvellously authentic survival of Elizabethan England, is all a bit specious, though a taste for well-done *kitsch* helps me to appreciate its over-emphatic charm. What is missing is the whole nasty side of Elizabethan life: the filth in the streets, the smells, the casual cruelty. Shakespeare's England, as projected by the tartered-up pubs and expensive gift-shops of Stratford, has a bland, emasculated image. Compare Thom Gunn's poem "A Mirror for Poets":

It was a violent time. Wheels, racks and fires
In every writer's mouth, and not mere rant.
Certain shrewd herdsmen, between twisted wires
Of penalty folding the realm, were thanked
For organizing spies and secret police
By richness in the flock, which they could fleece.

Hacks in the Fleet and nobles in the Tower.
Shakespeare must keep the peace, and Jonson's thumb
Be branded (for manslaughter), in the power
Of irons lay the admired Southampton.
Above all swayed the diseased and doubtful queen:
Her state canopied by the glamour of pain.

The productions of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, however, are likely to suggest something of the violence and the "glamour of pain," though as much prompted by currently fashionable notions of theatrical effect as by a feeling for the original texture of Elizabethan life. The resident company at Stratford is an extraordinarily talented set of actors, who are well used to working together as a team, without a star system, under a very able young director, Trevor Nunn. But the precise fact of performing in Stratford, where seeing a Shakespeare play is liable to be part of a tourist's package deal, imposes peculiar problems.

For instance, a good many of the audience will not understand a word the actors say. I'm not only thinking of tourists from outside the English speaking world, but of those from other parts of it. Without doubt many Americans find British speech only partially intelligible; and can make very little of the intricacies of Shakespearean dialogue. I do not so much refer to the young, the amiable, shaggy, hitchhiking students on vacation who do positively want to see the productions and if they get into the theatre at all have to occupy the cheap-

est seats or stand, and who show an intelligent interest in what goes on. But the comfortably-off middled-aged, the natural clients of the Stratford Hilton, go to the play because a ticket is included in the deal. In the more expensive seats during the season one has a distracting sense of being surrounded by increasingly restless people, some of whom by the end of the evening—since Stratford productions are usually long—will have fallen asleep. So, in an attempt to add a further dimension to Shakespeare's language, the productions tend to be visually striking and musically noisy; I don't say this is done in a deliberate attempt to hold the wandering attention of those who can't understand the words, but it does at least help to keep them awake. So, in time, one gets to look out for certain predictable features. There will, if at all possible, be a procession or a formal dance, or both. Processions move in a leisurely or purposeful way across the ample stage of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre: they can be regal or courtly, with magnificent costumes and solemn stately music; religious (a particular favourite, these), with priests in sacred vestments and cowled monks, banners and holy images held aloft, and ecclesiastical chanting; martial, with uniforms, pipes and drums; and, as anti-establishment manifestations, ragged processions of beggars or rioting citizenry, accompanied by harsh, jangling music. The set dances are most likely to occur in the comedies, and are often very beautiful, choreographically elaborate, and go on for a long time.

In setting and costume the Stratford designers suffer from something of a split mind. Whilst wanting to be visually striking, they are still in the grip of the modern cult that spurns elaborate effects and sees its ideal in a bare stage and plain, drab costumes, as though every play ever written was by late Beckett. At Stratford they grapple interestingly if, again, predictably with this limitation. Although the time has not yet come for a revival of full-blooded late-Victorian naturalism, with real trees, real waterfalls, even real horses (no doubt the cost would be prohibitive, even if taste were to swing back in that direction), the designers achieve some strikingly elegant effects of a largely geometrical kind. Though without doubt too much geometry can become a bore: last year there was an insufferable production of *The Tempest*, where much of the action took place in a long rectangular tunnel. The costumes can be very splendid, though richness will be off-set in the direction of modern austerity by having one or two characters who are shirtless and/or breechless most of the time. Indeed, one fairly predictable element is an almost naked man—a beggar or similar outcast—with realistic sores on his body; perhaps a reminder of what the streets of Elizabethan towns were really like, as opposed to the unnatural dapperness outside. Indeed, one way of making costumes striking is not to have any, and Stratford has sometimes succumbed to the prevalent fashion for theatri-

cal nudity. I believe it started in 1967 with Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* which featured a nude Helen of Troy; decorous enough, but adding nothing at all to the play (more memorably, this same production contained an outstanding performance of Faustus by Eric Porter, now globally known for his television role as Soames Forsyte). More recently there was an absurd production of *Pericles* in which most of the cast spent most of the play wearing only what looked like outsize babies' nappies (or, in American, diapers). In the event, it's the well- or even over-dressed productions that make the most dazzling impact, like the production several years ago of Tournear's rarely-performed *Revenger's Tragedy*, where the costumes had metallic hues and textures, that effectively combined richness and drabness and emphasized the sick atmosphere of the play.

The majority of the productions I have seen in the last few years have not stuck out very vividly in my recollection. This may be partly because in order to practise economy my wife and I have tended to take seats in the balcony, where the audience may be more genuinely appreciative, but where the incidental discomforts are greater. One of the attendant problems is that a succession of productions, each seen with the distant clarity that one gets through looking down the wrong end of a telescope, do rather blur together, at least in my memory. Recently, though, we decided to hang the expense and take better seats; we sat in the stalls, among the wealthier tourists, with one of them snoozing right next to us. It may have been coincidence, but greater comfort and closeness to the stage seemed to bring other rewards. At least, we saw a stunning performance of *Julius Caesar*, directed by Trevor Nunn, which was one of the best things I've seen at Stratford for years.

It is of course, a commonplace to regard this play as full of modern preoccupations about dictatorship and the nature of political power; and it has sometimes been played in fascist uniforms as a way of emphasising the point. Trevor Nunn's production reflects this concern, but he treated the question with due subtlety. The Roman soldiers were not in modern dress but in roughly correct uniforms, which were, however, coloured black throughout, thus making the point about fascism without too great a wrench from the historical context. The black contrasted significantly with the white togas of the patricians, establishing in visual terms the relationship—contrasting yet complementary—between military force and civil power. A third term was brought in after the murder of Caesar when the dazzling white of the togas was liberally daubed with blood. The murder was horrible enough, but done with just the right degree of stylization to prevent the horror from being overpowering, and the blood was made more than merely sensational by its emblematic quality. The whole of the death scene and the subsequent debate of the senators were superbly done, where the poetry and the dramatic action and the choreographic grouping and movement of the figures

on the stage were fused into a convincing unity. I was reminded of what Eliot once called, reviewing a production of the *Duchess of Malfi* in 1919, a "ballet of words." The separate performances showed the high degree of team-work and competence that one expects from Stratford at its best: I was particularly struck, though, by Richard Johnson's Mark Antony, an honourable and sensitive man forced reluctantly into the role-playing that is inescapable in the political life.

There were other, accidental reasons why this production made a particular impact on me. It opened with the inevitable procession—a very impressive example—with Caesar, as a defiant but aging dictator in black armour, advancing in measured tread to the front of the stage, surrounded by his henchmen, with a phalanx of banners behind and drums beating. The suggestions of a Nazi rally were unmistakable; it so happened that a few evenings before I had seen a showing of Leni Riefenstahl's famous film of the 1934 Nuremberg Rally, *Triumph of the Will*, so that my mind was already running on the imaginative appeal of fascism. The tragedy of the play, the bloodiness of the death and the shabbiness of the aftermath, made a necessary corrective to the euphoria of the film (itself made only a few weeks after Hitler had staged the Night of Long Knives). And yet the film remains haunting; a superb piece of cinema, and a deeply disturbing piece of persuasion for an unworthy cause. It also provides an affirmative answer to a question that is a standard teaser for seminars on ethics and aesthetics: could there ever be a great work of fascist art? There aren't many, perhaps, but this looks like one of them. Again, by chance I had been acting as external reader for some examination scripts written by students at the University of East Anglia, who had been taking a course on modern literature and history. Some of them, answering a question on the imaginative appeal of fascism to many twentieth-century writers, wrote so expansively and sympathetically about the nature of that appeal that I found myself momentarily disconcerted. These young people, born several years after the end of the Second World War, could deal with the topic as a pure historical exercise in a way that someone of my generation could never manage. No doubt they would have looked in a similar clear-eyed fashion at the myths of Napoleon that appear in nineteenth-century literature. Fascism died in 1945 but its myths and images survive in obscure reaches of the Western imagination: part of the quality of Trevor Nunn's production of *Julius Caesar* did, I think, lie precisely in its power to draw on those images, disreputable though they are, just as Leni Riefenstahl's film did.

I want finally to turn to Northern Ireland, where ancient myths explode nightly in the streets of Belfast and Londonderry.

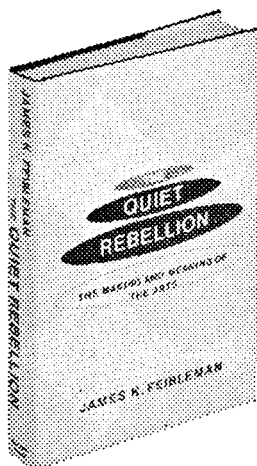
We had fed the heart on fantasies,
The heart's grown brutal from the fare.

Such quotations come a bit too easily, no doubt, but to someone like myself, who has never been to Northern Ireland, but who is rivetted by every TV report and newspaper story that comes out of it, a spectacular form of total drama is bloodily unfolding there. I won't engage in specific political comment, since whatever I say will be out of date by the time this Letter is published (the time-lag has caught me out in some of my previous comments on current affairs: I wrote last year that Dennis Healey was a leading supporter of the Common Market in the Labour Party, though by the time my remark was printed he had followed the party line against the Market; more recently I complained about Richard Crossman's editorship of the *New Statesman*, and almost at once he was sacked by the management). No one in England understands the Ulster problem or knows what to do about it, though the Heath government has made some bold and imaginative attempts since William Whitelaw took over the running of the province. Two rival and irreconcilable models can satisfactorily explain all the facts. The Catholic-Republican version says that Ireland should be united, that the Protestant minority are as much Irishmen as anyone else, that they should give up their perverse factionalism and agree to play a constructive part in a United Ireland. Furthermore, if only the British would leave the Protestants would have the sense to accept the situation and join with their fellow-countrymen. The Protestant-Unionist version says that they are just as much British subjects as the English, the Scots and the Welsh; that there is no reason why a million British people should be forced under the alien rule of the Irish republic, and that if it comes to the crunch they will fight to prevent it happening: Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right, as their old slogan proclaims. Around this total and polar opposition all the ancient myths proliferate: United Ireland versus the Red Hand of Ulster, Easter 1916 versus the Battle of the Boyne. It's a common left-wing assumption that Ulster is just a colonial problem, that if the Catholics were black and the Protestants white then the situation would be clear, and that British imperialism simply needs to get the message and clear out. Thus argues Senator Kennedy, in what appears to be a condition of complacent ignorance. In fact, many of the Protestants, who don't particularly like the English at the best of times, and now feel completely betrayed by the Westminster government, would like nothing better than for the British troops to get out so that they could make a really thorough job of carving up the Catholics. Last January, when British soldiers got out of control in Londonderry and shot thirteen Catholic civilians, some Protestants were reported as saying that it should have been 1,300. The liberal conscience finds it deplorable but understandable that tribal differences in remote countries in Africa should still run so strongly as to provoke periodic massacre: what is clearly incredible is that similar tribal divisions

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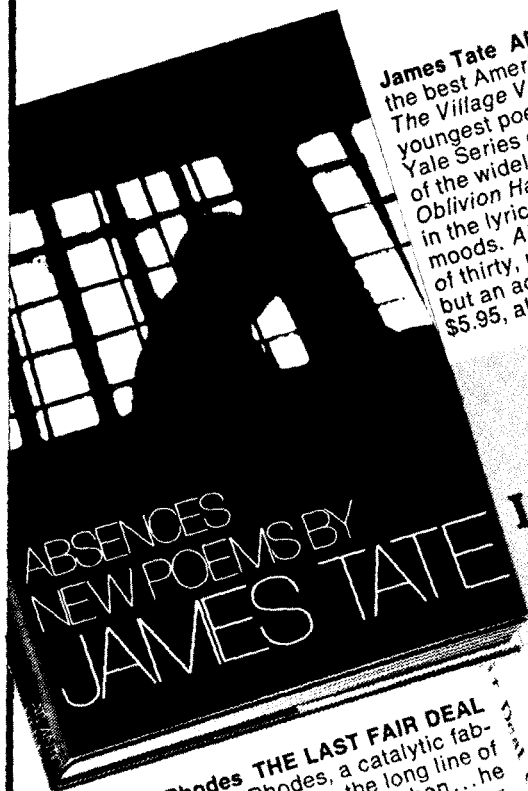
should lead to bloodshed and the threat of civil war in a corner of an advanced industrial society with a generally peaceful civic life. Granted, the Ulster Protestants, with their instinctive Calvinistic self-righteousness are a peculiarly unattractive community, who oppressed their Catholic neighbours for fifty years while indifferent Westminster governments let them get on with it. But one's basic sympathy for the Catholics has been reduced almost to zero by the nihilistic savagery of the IRA, the supposed heirs of the martyrs and heroes of 1916; the Catholic community, trapped in its myths, still seems to give the IRA pretty solid support. So in the name of a United Ireland they will shoot down off-duty policemen in front of their families, tar-and-feather a fifteen-year-old girl, set off large bombs without warning in crowded shopping streets. For all that, many Irish Catholics and some English radicals regard the IRA as Freedom Fighters; but they look pretty fascist to me, with their leather jackets and berets and dark glasses, their cult of violence, and their shabby ideology made up of shreds of nationalism and socialism. The other side look if anything more fascist; the Protestant Vanguard Movement has staged huge rallies with drums and waving banners where they are addressed by their führer William Craig, a chilling figure indeed, who is ready to talk about "liquidating" his opponents. Craig, a onetime hardline Home Secretary in the now dissolved provincial government, makes much of the British connection but is really an Ulster nationalist. The Protestants are reported to be well-armed and have their own paramilitary organization, the Ulster Defence Association. As I write there is a fairly strong expectation of civil war, and this is one expectation I hope will not be fulfilled by the time these words appear.

There's nothing but our own red blood
Can make a right Rose Tree.

So, indeed, might the fanatics on both sides proclaim. In the end, though, it's not Yeats one thinks of, but those great analysts of the revolutionary spirit, Dostoevsky and Conrad; where else but in *The Possessed* or *The Secret Agent* can one find analogues for the demonic psychic cripples, victims of an oppressive mythology, who are destroying Ulster in order to save it? Both sides have long preferred myths to reality, and history is punishing them for it. The *bürgerlich* intellectual, the citizen of a country with few myths, whose history is currently rerun as television serials, can only look on in wonder and horror, and resolve to keep heroic images locked up in books, where they can do no harm.

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